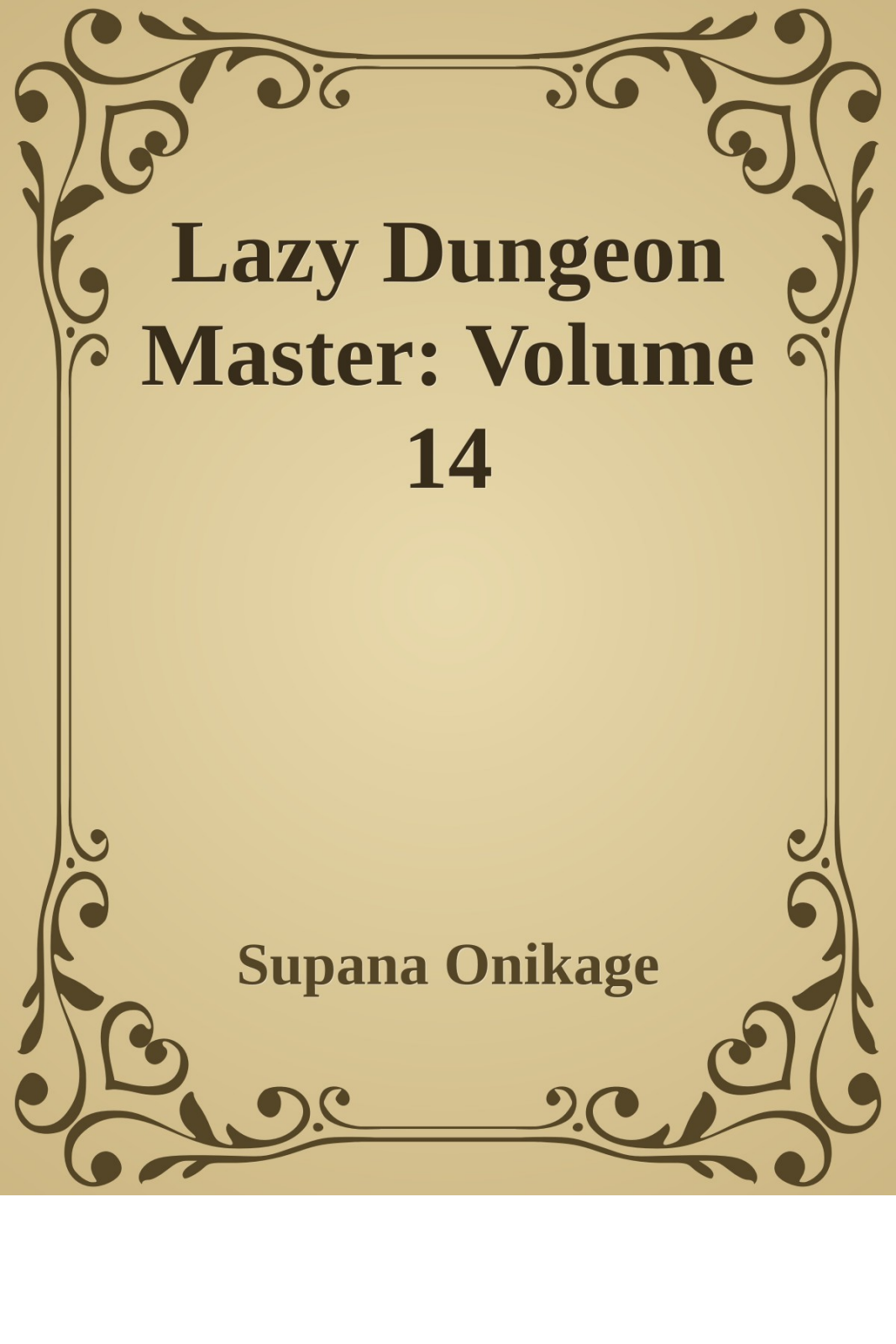


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Lazy Dungeon Master: Volume 14

Supana Onikage

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Lazy Dungeon Master

Supana Onikage **Illustrator:** Yonta





"NOT BAD, MISHA."

"THIS MIGHT BE A BIT
HARD FOR A DEMON
REALM PRINCESS!"

Haku's Catgirl Subordinate

MISHA



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Prologue

“Master, could you look over this document?”

“Sure. Thanks, Niku.”

We were in the middle of a carriage (a ridiculous one with an entire office built into it) on our way back from the Demon Realm, writing our report on the results of our trip. Said report was titled: *Friendship and Social Behavior in Demon Realm Culture*. I didn’t know how to write in this world’s language, so we needed to execute some unorthodox teamwork in the form of me speaking the contents of the report while Niku wrote down my words.

“Yep. This matches my notes perfectly,” I said. There were probably some misspellings and dropped letters mixed in, but something both convenient and inconvenient about my auto-translator was that it automatically converted all that into language I understood no matter what minor mistakes Niku made. “I’m sure one of Haku’s workers will fix up any typos and whatnot, so yeah. That should do it for the report. Good work, Niku.”

“Bwuh...” Niku groaned, falling onto the table in exhaustion.

Good work, my trusty loli. I thought I was free of reports after coming to this fantasy world, but I guess this is just part of doing work for the government. Though Rokuko doesn’t have to do it since she’s a “friendship ambassador” or something.

“But man, the Demon Realm sure was an intense place. I’m glad we made it out alive.”

“Hm? I thought it was comfy.”

Yeah, I guess the Laverio Empire has a bunch of battle junkies too. They’d all probably find the Demon Realm a comfy place to stay.

“Master... Um, can I ask for a reward?”

“Whoa. Rare for you to ask for something like that, Niku. Just say the word, and I’ll do anything I can.”

She must have been pretty exhausted from all the fuss. So I gave her one heck of a reward... By which I mean I stroked her like she asked. She seemed pretty happy about it, which was good enough for me.

Anyway, we submitted our report once we got back to the imperial capital and were informed we had an audience with Emperor Lionel the next day. There was nothing odd about that, since we had left on official empire business after an audience with the emperor.

There was just one thing.

Why am I kneeling in front of everyone else like I'm the leader of the expedition? I spent basically the entire month as a slave, remember? Anybody?

That said, I couldn't exactly voice my complaints. Haku was telling me to go, so I had no choice but to go. Having Rokuko take my place wasn't an option either, and Niku was hiding at the back, so...

It was I who received the great honor of being spoken to directly by Emperor Lionel. Admittedly, the impact of it all was a bit lessened by seeing him chat with Haku so casually, but even so, he had quite the intimidating aura. I would expect nothing less from an emperor.

"Baron Goren. Your efforts on this diplomatic mission were commendable—you have my praise."

"Thank you, sire!"

"To think we would have such a fundamental misunderstanding of Demon Realm culture despite our histories being intertwined for so long... If you would like, I can write a letter recommending that you be promoted to A-Rank in the Adventurer's Guild."

"I am honored, but I believe such a high status would be beyond me."

"I see. Regardless, I will send word that you are more than ready to be promoted to A-Rank whenever the opportunity arises," he continued. I didn't see how that was any different from him writing a letter of recommendation, but anyway. "I shall reward you in another manner, then. What do you desire? State anything you wish. Ah, granting the town of Goren independence from Tsia is fully possible. Shall we combine it with Dragg as well?"

Wait. Hold it, hold it. That's way more responsibility than I'd ever want. But luckily, I planned out a request ahead of time for this exact situation. It's time to play my cards right and see what happens.

"...If I may, Your Highness, I have one humble request. I am a member of the Beddhist Church, and we are collecting pieces of the Divine Bedding. It is my understanding that the Laverio Empire has some Divine Bedding in its possession, and all I ask is that you provide some assistance to my quest."

"Very well. But the Divine Bedding is considered treasure of the state, and I cannot give that to you. Instead, I shall permit you to rent the Divine Bedding in my empire's possession. Those in possession of the bedding will be told to provide them to you in accordance with your needs. You and they shall determine payment when the time comes."

What? W-Well, I guess sometimes things actually do work out. It never hurts to try, huh? His unexpectedly positive answer caught me off guard, and I could barely hold back my grin. *Thank you, Rokuko. It's*

thanks to your advice that I thought to do this at all.

“My empire possesses two pieces of the Divine Bedding—the Divine Mattress and the Divine Pillow. The House of Orkluv manages the mattress, while the House of Tsia possesses the pillow. I shall send word to both of them at a later time.”

“Yes, my liege! I am honored.”

“May you continue to serve the empire well.”

And so the audience came to a close.

...So I pretty much just got two pieces of the divine bedding, right? Let's see, what's left... the nightcap and underwear, I think? I have the other six (five excluding the alarm clock), so yeah, wow, I have most of them now. Whoa.

“Isn't that great, Master?”

“Y-Yeah. It sure is, Niku.”

I left the audience chamber filled with a fluffy sense of satisfaction, having gotten two pieces of the Divine Bedding all at once (three if you considered the Divine Pajamas I'd gotten in the Demon Realm). My goal was just a few steps away now.

Niku and I returned to the guest room in the castle I had been given, where we were then greeted by Rokuko and Neruneh.

“Good work, you two. How was the audience, Keima?”

“Good woork.”

“I didn't do much. I just knelt,” Niku said first.

“...Why are you two here, anyway? Not that it matters, but...”

Rokuko had been given another room, with Neruneh serving as her maid, but, well, nobody could get mad at her for waiting in her party member's room until they got back. As for Aidy, she was staying in a room specifically for diplomatic visitors.

“Alright, I'm just gonna say it straight. This trip to the Demon Realm just got us three entire pieces of the Divine Bedding. I-I know it sounds crazy, and I can hardly believe it myself, but there you go.”

“Really? Great. Seems like it was worth talking to Lionel ahead of time.”

Uh.

“Er, Rokuko? What did you say to the emperor?”

“Um. I mean, I just thought this would be a good opportunity, since you're collecting the whole Divine Bedding set. So...”

“Oh, yeah, it was a big help! I'm grateful, but wow!”

“Plus, all I did was answer when *he* asked me what kind of reward you would want.”

Wait, wait, then whose fault is this? Who set this up...? Or wait, no. Calm down, me, calm down. Think about it—nobody's losing anything here. Nobody's at fault. Empire Lionel's glad that all he needs to do is lend out the Divine Bedding to me, the managers of the Divine Bedding get paid

when I borrow them, and all I need to do is pay a bit to use all of them at once, so I'm as satisfied as can be. I got a little on guard since things seemed to be going too well, but I mean, hey, sometimes things just work out in your favor, and that's fine.

"Is something wrong, Keima?"

"Nope, not at all. You did good, Rokuko. Thanks. And... Er, well... I..."

"You?"

"Iii... luuhvvee... yooou."

.....

I thought I would try acting like we were a married couple just like I'd said I would when we got back from the Demon Realm, but it really just felt way too out of character for me. And I had to choke it out with my voice cracking. For a second I was too embarrassed to even look at Rokuko, but I was curious about how she was reacting, so I stole a glance at her face.

"Eeee...!!!"

Wow, that's bright red. Is this an apple I see?

"Neruneh, did you record that?"

"You beeeet. It was cute how he kinda bit his tooongue."

"Oh yes, he's a bundle of cuteness. I'm saving that one forever!"

Hey! I worked up all my courage to say that, and you're gonna make fun of me for it?! You want me to cry?! I'm gonna cry!

"Ah, sorry, Keima, really. But, um, w-well, it really did make me happy. So, u-um, don't say you won't ever say it again, please?"

"...Ngh."

"Here, I'll give you a kiss to cheer you up," Rokuko said, stepping forward and bringing her face close to mine.

E-Er, hello? There are kids (i.e. Niku) watching, y'know?

A sudden knock on the door sent me jumping away from Rokuko.

"...Gr. Things were just getting good, too," Rokuko grumbled.

"Rokukoooo, can I come in, dear?"

It was Haku. That was definitely Haku's voice. But this was the guest room Niku and I were staying in. In other words, to be perfectly clear, Rokuko's room was somewhere else entirely. The fact that Haku was asking Rokuko for permission to come in meant that she knew Rokuko was in my room. She must have checked the map and seen where she was.

Thiiii isn't good. We're in Haku's territory, but I totally let my guard down.

"Come on iiiiin," Rokuko called out. The door clicked open and in came Haku. She had on a very bright smile.

"Oh my, Keima is here too? What a coincidence."

"Ahahaha... I'll just be taking my leave now."

“Where might you be going? This is your room, remember.”

If you know that, why did you say it was a coincidence to see me here, huh?

“Incidentally, Keima, what were you doing with Rokuko just now...? Your faces seem quite red.”

“E-Er, nothing at all. I mean, I just got back, so...”

Holy shit, that's an intense glare. I'm about ten seconds from getting my head lopped off.

I looked to Rokuko for help. She shook her head with exasperation and sighed.

“Sister. Over here.”

“Hm? What is it, Rokuko?”

“Here.”

Rokuko sat on one of the beds and gestured Haku over. Haku, drawn like a moth to a flame, sat next to Rokuko.

“Pat my head?”

“...Um.”

“Pat it, sister. Here... Mm.”

Rokuko rested her head against Haku's bountiful chest. Haku jerked up, then reached a hand toward Rokuko's head.

Pat pat pat pat pat.

“Aaah, Rokuko, I missed you sooo much...! I'm so glad you came home safe... I was just so, so worried. I was beside myself with worry that something would happen to you in that country of barbarians!”

“Ahaha. Don't worry, Keima protected me.”

“...He was a slave, though?”

“He's the one who stuck Wataru with me, so it's all the same. And here I am, home safe and sound. That's what matters, and all's well that ends well. By the way... you stopped patting my head.”

“Ngh, ngggh... I-It is true that you ultimately ended up safe, but...”

“I would reaaaally like you to praise Keima for all he did, sister...”

Rokuko looked up at Haku with puppy dog eyes while her head was getting patted. When did she learn to do that?!

“...Keima. You did well to bring Rokuko home safe to the empire.”

“R-Right. Yeah. I just did what anyone would do.”

Haku praised me at Rokuko's request, wearing the most forced smile I had ever seen.

Weeell, in reality I actually did spend all my time as a slave while Rokuko went sightseeing and stuff with Aidy, but there's no need for me to say that here. I'll let Rokuko handle this.

“I'm really glad you recognize how hard Keima worked for me, sister.”

“Er, well, I...”

“Am I misunderstanding...?”

“Ngggh...!”

Rokuko kept up the attack, her body centimeters away from pressing directly against Haku's.

Hold on. Seriously, where did you learn these high-level techniques, Rokuko...? The Demon Realm? Did you learn them in the Demon Realm? What have you learned while I couldn't see you...?! Well, either way, looks like I'll be returning to Goren alive. Thank you, Rokuko. Thank you, Rokuko. I said it twice because it's just that important.

Chapter 1

So yeah, we ended up home safe and sound from the trip, but...

“Naturally, I fully intend to accompany Rokuko and you all.”

“Yeah, I expected as much.”

Aidy had hosted us at the Demon Realm, so it only stood to reason that we would host her in the empire. That said, we learned about that for the first time at a tea party with Haku.

I took a sip of tea from my mythrill teacup.

...Yep, I have no idea what kind of tea this is. But it does have the proper taste of good ol' black tea. Y'know, the fact I have the leeway to enjoy the flavor of what I'm drinking in front of Haku shows just how far I've come.

“And that is that, Keima. Take good care of Core 666 for me,” Haku said. Rokuko was sitting on her lap and Haku was stroking her hair. It was really about time for her to let Rok... *Actually, never mind. Headpat her to your heart's content.*

“Alright. It'll only take a day for us to get back to Goren from here,” I replied, recalling how long it took us to get here in the first place before leaving. We could just use the short cut route between dungeons if Aidy didn't mind going into my {Storage}.

“About that. I do believe I would like to do a little tourism. The way back is one thing, but on the way there I would at least like to see cities and the like.”

On the way there? Ohhh, right. It's the way back for us, but not for her.

“I am not so sure about deto—”

“Oh, perfect. I was just thinking I wanted to visit those cities I told you about again.”

“I will assign Dolce to accompany you. It wouldn't do for your trip to take too many days, so this will have to do,” Haku said, her attempt to reject the idea being shot down by Rokuko's deft counter.

I had met Dolce before. She was a Wraith serving Haku, one of her so-called Four Heavenly Kings that apparently managed the underground coliseum. Naturally, she could {Teleport} multiple people all on her own.

Having Dolce's help would be very welcome. She probably had more mana than I did. As expected of the Four Heavenly Kings. I sure respect the Four Heavenly Kings. Except Misha. Because she's Misha.

“Do put Dolce into {Storage} and carry her through the [Ivory Secret Spot] when you’re returning her, Keima.”

“Right... {Storage} sure is convenient, huh? There are all sorts of things you can do with it.”

“Though really, it’s simply unusual to have a sub-dungeon this far away from your primary dungeon. Not that I’m complaining. Father permitted it himself.”

Incidentally, it turns out that the farther away dungeon territory is from your starting point, the more DP it costs to buy. Mikan’s rabbit dungeon wasn’t too big of a deal since it wasn’t very far from his Core, but it was one of those things with a soft cap and exponential growth once you got too far. Which explains why Haku hadn’t established her own dungeon next to the [Cave of Greed] despite her huge store of DP.

...Oh yeah, we never did expand the dungeon territory for the [Ivory Beach]. Seems like it was just a special case.

“Hm? But wait, don’t they gain and lose dungeon territory in the Demon Realm through Dungeon Battles?”

“Indeed we do. I’ve heard Grandfather personally asked Father to instate those rules for Dungeon Battles exclusively within the Demon Realm.”

“Interesting.”

Aidy’s answer really reminded me just how accommodating Father was.

Anyway, we settled on leaving for the dungeon tomorrow. Why didn’t we leave immediately? Well, so Aidy could tour the imperial capital... or rather, so we could drop by the rabbit dungeon. I needed to pay Mikan some DP, so it seemed wise to meet up with Core 564 for a second.

“You know, I wanna watch Ichigo play live again. Don’t you, Aidy?”

“I certainly wouldn’t mind that, Rokuko.”

And so we headed to the dungeon made specifically for Mikan’s live shows—the [Rabbit Rest Spot]. Meeting up with Dolce would be kept for tomorrow as well.

“...It’s been a long time since I saw the rabbits,” Niku said.

“This will be my first tiime. I can’t waaaait,” Neruneh added. They were both excited for this too. As for Wataru, he wasn’t here. His long break had come to an end, and he was once again working to protect the empire’s peace as the Hero of Debt. *Work hard, my friend, as I will grant you permission to seek Neruneh’s hand in marriage once you’ve paid it all back.*

So yeah, I used {Teleport} to teleport into the staff room in the

back of the [Rabbit Rest Spot]. Seconds later, Mikan the orange rabbit core placed himself next to us with his dungeon function.

“Keima, at least warn me if you’re gonna come! Heya, by the way.”

“Heya, Mikan. You’re right, I should’ve sent a message.”

“It’s fiine. Welcome!”

We exchanged a fluffy handshake, with me taking that opportunity to pay back the DP I had borrowed from him. I still had plenty on me and we were on our way home, so no reason to put it off. It was hard to sleep when I knew I was in debt to someone.

“Yup, it’s all there! So, Keima, I’m guessing you’re not just here to pay me back? I see Rokuko and Aidy’re with you, so. What’re you planning?”

“We’re just sightseeing.”

“Sightseeing...? You guys, of all people...?”

It was true that we had all made this dungeon together, so there wasn’t much that was exactly new to us. That went for Aidy too. The only one visiting this dungeon for the first time was Neruneh.

“Well, it is about time for a live show! Wanna watch? The front row’s already packed, but I can get you some comfy staff seats!”

“Oh, perfect,” Rokuko interjected. “Let’s go, Aidy.”

“Indeed.”

And off they went, getting tickets from Mikan and heading to the plaza where live shows were held. Apparently they would just need to hand those tickets to one of the Ichigo Fan Club’s staff members.

As for me? I’m tired, so I’m just gonna watch through the dungeon monitor. Oh, Niku, thanks for the tea.

“By the way, there’s actually a lotta customers that wanna bring their glow sticks home with them! I was gonna ask for some more of them to build up our stock.”

“Oh, wow. Your stock is already running low? Neruneh, could you start producing more once we get home?”

“Okaaay. I’ll just make some more of the same desiiign,” Neruneh replied, which made Mikan’s ears perk up.

“Oooh! You’re the mage who made them?! We’ve made tons of money since we can just take them back, change the magic stone, and sell them again! Thanks a ton!”

“I’m not the one one you should thaaaank; it was Master who said having exchangeable magic stones would be the key to them being successfuuuul.”

Mikan gave Neruneh a fluffy hug of thanks.

Yeah, though it’s less a key and more a screwdriver. It’s just a simple system for casually making money. I can see why Mikan would be so happy about it. It’s pretty heartwarming to see all the soft Soldier Rabbits

swapping out the magic stones.

“Wanna see us selling them?” Mikan asked, directing his monitor to the stores by the dungeon. The glow sticks were right in the middle of being sold.

“Thanks for the business! You wanted five glow sticks, right?”

“Yup. Sure is nice that they’re such a cheap light source, and you can dump them once you’re done. Though I am gonna use two of them for the live show.”

...Hm. So some people are using them as flashlights, huh?

“As the person who made theem, it’s really nice to see people so happy to buy theem.”

“We can check out people actually using them too,” Mikan replied, flipping the monitor to the stage. It was an environmental room set to night regardless of what time it was outside, and all the customers were eagerly awaiting the live show’s start. Rokuko and Aidy were sitting in staff seats near the middle.

“Hi everyooone! It’s time for the live show to start! We’re starting off this time with ‘A Loving Rabbit’s Always Straightforward’!”

And so began the live show. Stage lights lit up Ichigo in her idol outfit, and musical Golems placed beneath the stage began to sing along with the song. The front row of customers all readied their giant fans and glow sticks.

“I want these feelings to reach you you yooou!”

“You you yooou!”

Whoa, the “wotagei” I taught them for the Dungeon Battle has gotten even more advanced... They’re using arrow and wing formations on top of the phalanx formation. Their glow sticks are really swinging all over the place. Really, they’re so in sync with each other it’s kind of crazy. It’s like they literally won’t let anyone be even a step out of place. They’re shining with their devoted radiance.

“Eeee! Ichigo is so cuuute! I desire her to be my betrothed!” cried an aqua-haired girl in the middle of the glow stick-swinging fans. It seemed that Emmymephy the Imperial Princess was now a regular visitor to the live shows. Apparently she was the honorary boss of the Ichigo Fan Club, with approval from the empire itself.

“Everyooone! Thank youuu! Next up is ‘A Sleepy Rabbit’s Rampage’!”

Rokuko and Aidy were both standing up and swinging their glow sticks too, having tons of fun. Good.

“Watching people actually use the glow sticks is nice toooooo, don’t you thiiink?”

“Yeah, as the one who invented them, I have to agree.”

I watched the video of the live show while sipping tea prepared by Niku.

“By the way, how’d all that about you getting a Dungeon Master go, Mikan?”

“S-Still working on it. I do have Rinnew on our side now, but, y’know...”

“The sooner you make her your Master, the better. Your lives and fates will end up intertwined forever, so yeah.”

Why isn’t she his Master yet when, supposedly, Father manipulates fate to put these things into place? Could it be that Father doesn’t have as much influence in the physical world as I thought? Nah, it’s probably just that Mikan’s incompetent.

I glanced back at the monitor while wondering if there was anything I could do to help out.

“Ichigooooo! I love yooooou! I saaaaay, I love yooooou!” cried the imperial princess, boldly standing in the front row and screaming her heart out.



“That was a great live show! You should’ve been there watching with us, Keima.”

“It certainly was a different experience when seen from up close. I felt similar exhilaration to observing death matches in the coliseum.”

Rokuko and Aidy came walking back. Niku served them both tea, which they gulped down all at once.

“And that was Mephy in the front row, wasn’t it?”

“Seems like she’s a regular here.”

“I wonder if imperial princesses have that much spare time.”

We glanced at the monitor and saw Emmymephy lined up for a post-show handshake with Ichigo. She was happily gripping her glow stick and raving about the show to a nearby imperial guard. “Today was incredible once again! Also, we made eye contact! That certainly means that Ichigo is in love with me as well!”

I’m pretty sure she’s keeping up with her actual work. Though that includes “observing” this dungeon.

“So, wanna go home now that the show’s over?” I asked.

“You know, there’s something called *mood* and *lingering excitement*. You should value those kinds of things more, Keima. Like saying hi to Ichigo after her handshakes and praising her for working so hard.”

That makes it sound like I’m her sponsor, but you know, I guess I kind of am.

“Should I get a bundle of flowers to give her?”

“I think she’d like carrots and strawberries way more than flowers! They taste better,” Mikan chimed in.

Oh, he’s thinking about this purely in the realm of eating them. I guess they are rabbits...

“By the way, where’s Core 564?”

“Aaah, he’s in the middle of making a boss right now. We’re gonna start the raid events back up soon, so he’s all about making a boss we can be proud of! He’s also refilling the mobs with the {Create Golem} skill you gave us.”

Apparently Core 564 was digging up the ground and making Golems with {Create Golem} while grumbling about how he had to make monsters that served no purpose except to be defeated. That was the same two-birds-with-one-stone process for growing the dungeon while producing enemies at the same time. According to Mikan, there weren’t any adventurers who were pushing past the staff-only areas to explore deeper.

“Rokuko, Aidy! Th-Thank you for watching today!” Ichigo exclaimed after getting back and seeing both Rokuko and Aidy. Her frightened, quaky nature was a reminder that she was indeed a War Rabbit.

“Oh, welcome back, Ichigo. That was a good show!”

“Indeed. The fan club’s wotagei has become much more trained as well. They will be fine generals, all of them.”

“R-Right! Thankshu very mwuch!!!” Ichigo said, so frightened she kept biting her tongue mid-sentence.

“A singing voice so beautiful it shocks listeners like lightning, beauty so bewitching even the imperial princess finds herself enraptured, and dancing more skilled than anyone else in the empire... You’ve grown so much, Ichigo!”

“Oh my, Rokuko. Is that your appraisal of this little rabbit? She truly is something else, then.”

“Th-Th-Th-Thank you!”

If there was such a thing as killing someone with praise, that was it.

“...Praising her too much will actually stress her out, y’know?”

“Oh, we don’t want that,” Rokuko said with a nod. She and Aidy left it at that. Anyway...

“Hey, king. Who’re all these people?” asked none other than Rinnew, the adventurer who didn’t know about dungeon secrets yet but was nonetheless Mikan’s potential Dungeon Master. At the moment she managed the adventurers who regularly came to the rabbit dungeon. Mikan had said that she was his ally now, and apparently that meant she was allowed back here.

“Errm. How do I say this...” Mikan trailed off, scratching his furry cheek while glancing toward me.

“Let’s just say I’m a staff member too.”

“He’s a staff member!”

“Y-Yeah? Alright, then. I’m Rinnew. Nice to meet you, yeah?”

Mikan repeated what I’d said with such energy that Rinnew faltered a bit and just went with it.

“The truth is, Keima is my producer,” Ichigo said. “He taught me to sing and dance.”

“Whoa, that was you? Uh... You wrote those lyrics? Really? Like, for real?”

Rinnew looked between the two of us in disbelief. It was actually Succuma who’d written the lyrics, but Succuma was also me, so technically that was true.

“I visualized Ichigo while writing them. Got a problem?”

“Nah, you’re the best!”

She slapped me on the back enthusiastically. I knew she meant it in a good way, but it actually hurt. Ow, ow.

I avoided Rinnew’s attacks and whispered into Mikan’s ear. “By the way, Mikan. Why don’t you try calling Rinnew ‘Master,’ just to see how it feels?”

“Hrm?” Mikan looked up, confused.

“She won’t notice anything off. You’ll be calling her Master soon enough, so this is just practice. Okay? You just gotta say it once.”

“Hrm... Okay?”

At my encouragement, Mikan glanced at Rinnew.

“What’s up?” she asked.

“Errm, well... I-I can’t say it! It’s too embarrassing!”

Mikan turned his head away after Rinnew looked at him.

“Just say it, man. Let it out. Go, go, go.”

Mikan glanced at Rinnew with his paws covering his face. Rinnew just looked back at him, confused, her hand resting on her leg.

“Erm, ngh, hrm... M-Masteeer? Eep! I said it!” Mikan squealed, sounding like a middle school girl who’d just confessed. And an instant later, a transparent window appeared in the air.

“Hm? What’s this thing?”

“Wha?!”

Oh wow, we can see that too. “Rinnew has been recognized as Dungeon Master.” Yep, yep. Exactly as planned. This feels pretty nostalgic, honestly. And the fact that there’s “Good job, Keima” written in tiny letters on the bottom right shows that Father is clearly watching this and interfering.

“Well, there you have it, Mikan. Good luck!”

“Whaaaaat?! This is so mean! Keima, why would you do this?!
AAAH!”

“Shut it. If I’d left this to you, I know you would’ve put it off forever. It’s the first step that always matters the most in these matters.”

There was the saying that acting was better than thinking. Their lives were going to be intertwined and all that, so the sooner it happened, the better.

“Er, king? What’s all this about being a Master?”

“Welcome to the underground side of the world. Don’t tell anyone about us; Absolute Authority is a pain in the ass, so turn it off fast, and that’s all I’ve got to say on the matter. Rokuko, retreat!”

“Er, um, okay?”

I speedily activated {Teleport} and left with Rokuko and the others. Niku had extra tea prepared for just this moment.

Later on, both Rokuko and Aidy chastised me for being so pushy, saying that I “didn’t understand the hearts of Dungeon Cores,” but, well, that’s another story.

Anyway. With Rinnew successfully turned into Mikan’s Dungeon Master, it was finally the next day and time for us to leave. We would be heading back to Goren with Dolce accompanying us.

We all gathered in a room of the castle to teleport. Haku’s party

and I could just teleport as we pleased, but it was actually a spell that normally took an entire group of mages working together to cast. There was an entire room just for it. After meeting up with Rokuko (who had slept next to Haku the night before), we found Dolce floating in the air while waiting for us. Aaand she was the only one there.

“...Where’s Haku? I thought for sure she would be seeing us off.”

“Oh, Haku’s still sleeping. We talked for so long yesterday that I told Chloe we should just let her sleep in this morning,” Rokuko said, then put a finger on her lip and giggled. “I stocked up on a lot of them this time,” she continued proudly. She was probably talking about Haku stocking up on her Rokuko time. I couldn’t imagine what else she would be talking about.

“Oh my. You forced me to sleep on my lonesome just for that?” Aidy said.

“What can I say? It’s just that important to me.”

“I suppose I can’t protest, then.”

She really went far just to help protect me. Thanks, Rokuko.

“So with that settled, we’re all good to leave, Dolce.”

“Understood, Lady Rokuko. If you discussed this with Chloe, then it must be fine... Oh, nobody is forgetting anything, right? Is everyone here?”

Dolce looked us over while floating. Me, Rokuko, Aidy, Niku, Neruneh. *Yeah, we’re all here.*

“So, Keima. Could you put that pup and maid into {Storage} to lessen the mana costs?” Dolce asked, pointing at Niku and Neruneh.

“Wha?” I replied, confused. I thought that putting living things into {Storage} didn’t impact the cost of {Teleport}.

“Oh yes, I do recall Rokuko’s Master putting Core 564 into his {Storage}. That didn’t lessen the cost at all, I believe?”

“Right, right. What does it change?”

“...Ah, I understand. I cannot blame you for misunderstanding this, but Dungeon Cores are demigods, so their time is not stopped within {Storage}, and the mana cost doesn’t change.”

“Uh.”

Dolce explained to me how {Storage} and {Teleport} worked together. Now that she mentioned it, given that the Dungeon Cores considered the Darkness God their Father, they were logically his children. They could completely be classified as gods. In a way, it made total sense that their time didn’t stop inside {Storage}, which would mean I was just carrying them around normally, which in turn meant the mana cost wouldn’t go down.

“So that explains why Core 564 was all teary-eyed... I feel kinda bad now.”

“Fear not, Rokuko’s Master. Core 564 lost to you, and thus you may do whatever you wish with him, no matter how cruel. He would have no right to complain even if you smashed his head to bits and cut his body to pieces,” Aidy said helpfully, providing a valuable yet extremely violent Demon Realm perspective. She was right, too. He probably wouldn’t be able to complain if I did all that. Since dead people can’t talk.

Yeah. I kinda feel like apologizing to Core 564.

“Incidentally, we Four Heavenly Kings and Chloe are all demigods as well,” Dolce admitted abruptly.

Well, that makes sense. I guess you have to be about that powerful to have enough mana to teleport a bunch of people at once, and serve as Haku’s direct subordinate for over a hundred years.

As I put Niku and Neruneh into {Storage}, a sudden thought struck me.

“Dolce, how did you become a demigod?”

“Living sacrifices,” she replied casually, then started chanting the incantation for {Teleport}.

* * *

Once the {Teleportation} was complete, we were in the room of some mansion. Apparently it was one of Haku’s bases in Corky. Dolce flopped down to the ground.

“Guh. I knew it wouldn’t be easy going so far with so many people... I’ll be resting here, and tomorrow you’ll be helping me, Keima. Okay. We can meet up here...”

“Er, right. Thanks for everything.”

Dolce faded away before our eyes. She could go transparent, just like you would expect from a Wraith.

Anyway, it’d be a bit awkward to just leave them in there, so I took Niku and Neruneh out of {Storage}.

“I seeee, so that’s how it feels to be put into {Storaaage}. You were riiight, Niku. It’s not bad at aaall.”

“Right. It’s very nice being treated like an object by Master,” Niku said, wagging her tail proudly with a happy sniff.

“...I think I’d like to try visiting your {Storage} too, Keima.”

“Rokuko. Didn’t we just get told that Dungeon Cores are demigods and their time doesn’t stop inside {Storage}?”

“If you’re going to be putting Aidy into yours later, don’t you think it’s only right to try it out with me first?”

I already put Core 564 into my {Storage} once, remember? Though he ended up crying.

“More importantly, Rokuko and Rokuko’s master, I would like to see the city,” Aidy said with an eager smile that showed how

impatient she was.

“Okay! I’ll show you around. I’ve been here before.”

“Oh my. I shall indeed request that you escort me, then.”

You sure you should be acting like such a know-it-all, Rokuko? You’ve only been here once before. Though I guess you don’t have to worry about getting lost with the map function.

“I’ll come with. Niku, keep us safe.”

“Understood,” Niku replied, wagging her tail happily as usual.

“What’re your plans, Neruneh?”

“I wouldn’t want to be the only one staying hooome, so I’ll come with yooou,” Neruneh said in her maid outfit with a smile, which settled that.

And so the five of us left the mansion to go outside. The clanging of metal we could hear all around us made it hard to forget that this was the City of Blacksmiths. There were dwarves and other races chugging beer at stands dotting the main street, just like last time. The variety of races wasn’t quite as broad as it was in the Demon Realm, but it was wider than Tsia’s for sure.

“You know, come to think of it, this was the city where I got kidnapped before,” Rokuko said while walking. I had totally forgotten about it, but she was right. Some terrorists funded by the Holy Kingdom had targeted Emmymephy the imperial princess to land a blow to the empire, and in the process Rokuko and the others were kidnapped too. They ended up imprisoned in a lake where an Undyne lived.

“...I wonder if Unko’s doing alright. We ended up leaving her to some people after she got super drunk and we needed to leave for the imperial capital, and that was the last we ever saw of her... Alright, let’s go see if we can find Unko.”

“Didn’t we end up calling her Dinne?”

Oh yeah. Good point.

“Oh my, a kidnapping? That sounds oh so exciting.”

“I was really surprised when Undyne grew like a thousand times in size into a giant.”

“Master jumped into her foot.”

“Wooooow. That’s our Master for yooooou.”

Our little party chatted excitedly about memories as we walked. Eventually, we passed by the smithy where Kantara’s family lived.

“Oh, perfect timing. Let’s get our weapons fixed up, since we used them so much in the Demon Realm.”

“Oh my, Rokuko’s master. Is this the smithy of an exceptionally skilled blacksmith?”

“More or less. I can’t really say too much since I’m just an amateur when it comes to this stuff.”

We went behind the smithy just as the back door opened. Kantara's dad, Untara, stepped out carrying a barrel of beer on one shoulder. That was about what you would expect from a dwarf, but it was only noon.

"Hm? Yer all... Ah! Yer the town town chief of that town Kantara's stayin' at! You ain't back there yet? C'mon in, lemme get you a glass o' beer."

Untara popped out the cork from the barrel without even waiting for us to reply. If only Ichika was here, I could have her chug all the beer for us.

"More importantly, I wanted you to check out our weapons. Are you busy with something right now?"

"Nah, not in th' least. Yer all welcome here any time. Lemme take a look."

Untara wedged the cork back in and gestured for me to show our weapons. Seemed like I would be getting out of this without having to drink. I held out Siesta for him, after telling the blade not to exude sleepiness, of course.

"Gah, ye ain't usin' this baby at all! Yer Magic Blade's cryin', pal... Or maybe this one's cryin' tears of happiness? The heck's with that? Gahahaha!"

Yeah, I guess I mainly just used those wooden practice swords... Siesta's probably glad that I'm using him to put people to sleep, even if I'm not cutting people down with him or anything.

"I don't need to do nothin' for it yet. But here, have some {Revitalize}! Next!"

After casting {Revitalize}, a Survival spell for revitalizing the earth, he got to work on Niku's Golem Knife. She had used it a lot in her mock duels with Core 50; Untara was plenty satisfied with that. He took out a whetstone and finished sharpening it in no time.

"Seems like you've gotten plenty stronger from fightin' some tough foes! {Revitalize}! Next!"

Rokuko slid out her ornamental rapier and handed it over.

"You ain't even been swinging this at the air for practice! {Revitalize}, next! Wait, you ain't that big tiddy girl from earlier. Still got pretty big tiddies, though!"

"Aaah, I don't have a swoooooord. And Ichika stayed home this tiiime."

"Damn. A'ight, what about you, red-headed girl?"

Untara dismissed Rokuko's Magic Blade, skipped over Neruneh, and finally got to Aidy.

"Hm? I suppose I shall allow you to feast your eyes upon it."

Aidy pulled out the naked blade of her red Magic Blade and held it up for Untara. It was her true body, the fire Magic Blade.

“...Beautiful. This blade is beautiful and strong. It is one of the finest weapons I have ever seen,” Untara breathed as he gazed upon Aidy’s Magic Blade. “Ye have become one with your sword, I can tell. This my first time seein’ a Magic Blade on this level.”

“Of course. After all, it would be fair to say that this Magic Blade is my true self,” Aidy said with a slight grin, clearly pleased with her Magic Blade being praised.

“I hate to say it, but this blade’s beyond me. I can’t do nothin’ for ye. Not that it needs any repairs, by the looks o’ it.”

“A wise observation. I shall recognize you as a smith of moderate skills.”

“Gahaha! Now that’s an honor, miss. If ye said a god made that blade, well, I’d believe it.”

Wow, now that’s sharp. Aidy’s a Magic Blade Core, which means that literally is a Magic Blade that Father the God of Darkness made. Untara hit the nail on the head.

“Oh, right. How much do we owe you?” I asked.

“Nothin, nothin! My son owes ye all a lot! Not to mention...”

Untara took out a mythrill yen-like necklace out of his shirt—a Beddhist holy symbol. “Today’s a restin’ day! I ain’t workin’, I’m just helpin’ my pals out! Gahaha! Oh, since it’s a restin’ day, I gotta get drunk as hell with Lady Dinne!” he bellowed with laughter, picking the beer cask back up.

“Er, well, at least lemme thank you for your time.”

“Don’t sweat i—Oh? Oooh! If it ain’t more o’ that sake stuff! A’ight, I’ll take it! Now I kinda feel bad about not doin’ much!”

I handed over some sake that I’d bought with DP while pretending to grab it from my bag and handed it over. Untara rested the beer barrel on his shoulder and cradled the sake like it was his precious baby.

Once again I was reminded that the best gift for dwarves was alcohol. Lest I ever forget.

“While we’re here, why don’t we go see Dinne, too?” Rokuko suggested, and so we casually walked over to Dinne’s spring.

Along the way, Aidy abruptly stopped.

“Incidentally, Rokuko. Is this a human farm?”

“Hm? No, it’s a normal city. Why would you think that?”

“Oh my. But then why are there walls to prevent the humans from escaping?” Aidy asked, pointing at the several-meter high stone walls surrounding the city.

“Those are just the city defenses. Which reminds me, your cities didn’t have any walls around them. That’s pretty weird from our perspective.”

“Hm...? But enclosing your cities will prevent wild monsters from

entering. Whatever will you do about that?” Aidy asked, tilting her head in confusion.

“That’s the point, we don’t want them inside. The people of the empire don’t like fighting as much as you Demon Realm people do. Didn’t I mention that?”

“Ah! Oh, you certainly did, but... Was that not a jest? I suppose that explains why even the weaker-looking humans are wearing proper clothes.”

Aidy looked genuinely surprised about all this. As a Japanese person, I had to say that the Demon Realm folk were definitely the weird ones here.

“Er... Aidy. I’ll cut to the chase. Don’t think your Demon Realm manners will apply here. Surprise attacking people as a greeting is a big no-go.”

“How should I greet them, then?”

“Just be normal... or I guess, challenging people to duels would be a normal greeting to you, huh?”

Guess I can’t just say “normal” to someone who doesn’t share my common sense.

“Alright, how about this: just say ‘Hello,’ or ‘Good day,’ to them.”

“Consider this a lesson learned,” she said, which reminded me she was here to learn about our culture in the first place.

We left the city and arrived at the pond where Dinne lived, where we found a small shrine by the side of the water surrounded by dwarves chugging beer. Dinne was there too, and everyone had on Beddhist holy symbols. Some drunk dwarves had collapsed on the ground and were sleeping with their arms spread out.

“Wow, that looks fun!”

“...Don’t drink anything, Rokuko.”

“Aw, I can’t?”

“No. You get out of hand when you get drunk.”

Naturally, I wouldn’t let Niku drink either. Neruneh... would probably be fine? Aidy would probably start cutting people down when drunk, which was kinda scary.

“Ah! Ah! You! I forgot your name, but you’re that super duper rude guy!” Dinne cried out, pointing my way after we approached.

“Hm? Oooh! It’s Wataru the Hero’s companion!”

“The man who took down Lady Dinne!”

“The Beddhist guy!”

And so the drunks all started calling out to me too.

Okay, I guess that’s how they’re remembering me. Hm... I came here without a plan, but we should probably leave before things get rough.

“Glad to see you safe. Anyway, guess I’ll be taking my leave now.”

“GET HIIIM!” Dinne yelled, and instantly the drunks had us

surrounded. They weren't hostile, but they definitely looked ready to stir up some trouble for laughs. Aidy must have picked up on that too, given how they weren't all dead already. Not that it was too hard, given that they were all holding wine jars and wooden beer mugs instead of weapons.

"Ye gotta have one drink before ye go!"

"Nah, three!"

"Chug, chug, chug!"

The red-faced drunks pushed beer our way. Untara was in the crowd, and, uh, both Aidy and Rokuko were just taking the mugs? *Even though I just said no? Neruneh, don't tap mugs with Niku! Oh, Niku's mug has clean water from Lady Dinne, you say? I guess that's fine then... Wait, no, no, no.*

"Keima, let me just make this clear... You told me not to drink, but I was never okay with that!"

"Oh my, then I shall drink as well. Cheers?"

Rokuko and Aidy clinked wooden mugs, then chugged. *Nooo. Wait, when did this mug get in my hands? I see it has ale inside. What, were we all doomed to drink the moment we came here?*

"HAH HAH HAH! None shall come to my spring and remain sober! Except children."

"Mm. But it looks fun. I want to drink too," Niku said.

"Children must be satisfied with juice! Here, it's juice made from berries gathered in my forest."

Dinne poured purple juice into Niku's cup once she finished her water. *God, I wish that were me. Gimme some juice.*

"Aaah, I feel kinda waaarm? Geheheh, ahahahaaa?"

Neruneh's cheeks were getting red and she was getting a refill. But Dinne put on the brakes, saying she'd start to feel sick if she drank any more. What exactly was she basing that on?

"Eheheh. I am Undyne, a spirit of water! I can detect the blood alcohol levels of humans as easily as I breathe!"

"...So, what? With you around, people can drink safely?"

"Exactly. If someone tries to drink too much, I do this!" Dinne flicked her finger up, and the ale a drunk was trying to pour himself shot up like a fountain and formed into a floating ball above Dinne's palm.

"Hey, hey, hey, that's just cruel, Lady Dinneeee!"

"Hmph. I don't want your vomit in my spring. I won't allow anyone to drink too much!"

"Tccch."

I get it. That's why this place is so orderly despite everyone drinking so much. And why people are bothering to go this far out of town to drink, plus build a shrine. It's the perfect place for a drinking party.



“Ooohohoho! Praise me; worship meee!”

“So, what’re you gonna do about that beer?”

“Hm? Oh, yes. Hyah!”

She tossed the ball of ale... riiight into Aidy’s mug.

“Uh, could you not?”

“Oh my... I suppose it’s only good manners to drink what’s poured for you,” Aidy said, chugging it without so much as blinking. Dinne grinned proudly.

“Oh, it’s fine. I’ll stop her once drinking any more will get her sick... My alcohol management for humans is perfect! You can count on me!” she said, and in an instant, something exploded.

“You know... I sure am burning, aren’t I? Hic!”

I looked at where the sound had come from and saw Aidy’s body covered in flames.

“E-Eek! Is she not a human?! She deceived even my own perfect eyes...?!”

“Uh, Dinne?”

Given that Aidy was remaining totally calm and neither her hair nor her clothes were burning, this was probably just her powers as a flame Magic Blade leaking out.

“Oh no, the girl’s in trouble! Get ’er some water, some water!”

“Mmmmm...? No, I’m fine... Burp!”

“Hey hey, that’s ale, not water! Guess it’s all the same if it puts out the fire... Gah!”

A kindly drunk went and splashed beer onto Aidy’s flames. But that only made the fire roar higher.

“Aaah, that’s the Magic Blade’s power! To think ye really are one an’ the same! It’s power is makin’ its way back to you, damn! And that beer just disturbed the balance! Gahaha!”

“Oh, you are that moderately talented smith from before... Mmm, I suppose? I do feel excellent right now.”

“Woow, you’re on fire, Aidy! So pretty. But it’s hot, so don’t get too close,” Rokuko said while stepping away from Aidy and chugging more ale.

“Gaaah, Rokuko! How are you already drunk?! I only looked away for one second! That’s too fast!”

“Keimaaa! Over here! C’meeeeeere!”

“Stop drinking! You’ll get out of control again!”

“Aww, c’moon! Why aren’t YOOOU drinking? You hate kissing me thaaat much?”

Rokuko started marching this way despite telling me to come to her. Then she hugged me. Then she pushed out her lips and brought her face to mine. Onto my cheek.

Oooh, soft. Maybe this would be nice if she didn't stink of alcohol and people weren't watching. Gah, she's already out of control. It's too late.

"Alright, you're done. Hey, Dinne."

"I-I mean, you're still sober, so it's fine, right? I knew you would be able to handle her," Dinne replied, her voice shaking and her gaze wandering.

"I'm not mad. Rokuko's responsible for her own drinking. I just want to make her drink water."

"R-Roger! C-Coming right up!"

A ball of water appeared in the air and slipped into Rokuko's mouth. *Convenient.*

"En garde, pup! I shall train you."

"Okay."

Niku and Aidy abruptly began a mock duel.

Hey, quit it! At least use wooden swords instead of those Magic Blades! That's dangerous! You're seriously having a drunken duel with actual blades?! You've got to be out of your mind to... Oh wait, they're drunk!

"Oooh! I'll fix up yer blades as much as I gotta! Go nuts! Gahahaha!"

"You! Smith! There are some things you just shouldn't say!"

"Oooh? Don't sweat it! Gettin' drunk don't hurt my skills at all! Makes 'em a little better, actually! Gahaha, gahahaha, GAHAHAHAHA!"

And so the reckless drunks cheered out their agreement, backing him up. That was bad. I needed to do something fast.

"Neruneh! Help me get Rokuko!"

"Hic!"

Oh, right, she was drinking too.

With a bright smile, Neruneh came over and started smacking my shoulder. "Masteeer, don't you love Rokukooo?! Why don't you respond to her feeliings?! Can't you see how cute she iiis?!"

"She's right, Keima! Just look at how cute I am! Why don't you do anything?!"

Now Rokuko was in my face too.

"We can talk about that later, so could you both just calm down for now?"

"Zzz..."

Did they seriously both fall asleep the second I said to calm down? What is even going on?

★ ★ ★

To be honest, I didn't really remember how or when we got back to the base in Corky. I did remember that Niku helped me carry the

three of them into their rooms (I went ahead and carried Neruneh in {Storage}). Time mercilessly continued passing despite the mess, and before long it was time to meet up with Dolce.

“Nmm... Keimaaa, my head hurts. Heal meee.”

“Yeah, yeah. O hangover begone, {Healing}, {Healing}, and have one more {Healing} for free.”

I cast healing magic on Rokuko, Aidy, and Neruneh.

“Oh my, you have my thanks, Rokuko’s master. The light weight in my head is no more.”

“Masteer, thank yooou. Fwaaah...”

Dolce blinked at how exhausted they all were. “Are you alright? Do you need another day of rest?” she asked kindly, but I sensed that she just wanted another day to rest herself. I, on the other hand, wanted to get back to town as soon as possible to sleep in my own bed, so I declined her generous offer.

We started off with me teleporting everyone as far away from Corky as I could go. Dolce then teleported us to another base in the river city of Donsama, or to be specific, South Donsama.

“...Guh.”

“Bluh. It doesn’t get any easier... Good work, Keima. See you tomorrow... Aaah, and we’ll be going to North Donsama normally tomorrow before teleporting,” Dolce said before disappearing. I went ahead and took Niku and Neruneh out of {Storage}.

...Urk, I kinda wanna throw up. Feels kinda like the world is spinning since I used so much mana at once. Now I understand why Dolce wants to spend a whole day resting, yeah.

“Keima, we were thinking about touring Donsama,” Rokuko said.

“I’m gonna sleep. Wanna focus on recovering mana, so... Niku, I’ll trust you to guard them. You too, Neruneh.”

“Understood.”

“Okaaaay.”

I’ll recover almost instantly with the Divine Pajamas, so I should pretty much always be ready by tomorrow. Alright, sleepy time.

“Er, also, Rokuko... Could you not drink this time?”

“I would never drink when you’re not around. I only let myself loose like that when I’m around you,” Rokuko said, puffing out her chest with pride.

“Oh my. Is that so? You must truly trust your Master, Rokuko.”

“Uh-huh. And that’s why you can’t drink today either, Aidy. You went nuts after drinking yesterday.”

“...You do realize I allowed myself to get drunk on purpose, yes? As a Core, I could dispense of the alcohol without being affected by it whatsoever.”

I would rather you not get drunk at all then, but I guess it’s all part of

the tour.

In any case, I changed into the Divine Pajamas and slept soundly. For dinner I had some delicious salted fish that Rokuko brought back for me.

“Is there even anything to see in this city?”

“Aidy skipped over the water. When I said Wataru could do it, she said she could do it too, then, and thus became a hero.”

Oh yeah, I remember something about everyone who crosses the river on foot becoming a hero. Which means she succeeded...? I guess that's no surprise for Aidy. I wouldn't be shocked if wings of fire sprouted from her back.

“What about you, Keima? Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I used my Divine Pajamas.”

“Aaah, of course. That's what pajamas made by Father will do for you.”

Anyway, fast forward to tomorrow.

“Okaaaay. Let's go north by carriage,” Dolce said while appearing through a wall. The six of us rode a carriage to the base in the north side of the city. To be honest, it barely made a difference, but she wanted to save as much mana as possible. I could understand that.

“So, I've decided to have you use {Teleport} several times today, Keima.”

“Uh.”

“I mean, you can recover all your mana after just an hour of rest, right? Thanks to those Divine Pajamas of yours.”

“That's true, but I can't say I'm happy about this.”

“I worked hard the first day. Now you'll work hard today. Equals. Okay?” Dolce asked, grumbling to herself. Apparently she really hated using mana for {Teleportation}. Though, to be fair, as a Wraith it would be fair to say her entire existence was composed of mana, so losing mana hurt her a lot more than it hurt me.

“It'll be fine,” Rokuko said. “You just have to rest a bit between each {Teleportation}, right? I'll even let you use my lap as a pillow.”

“You think I could do that in front of Dolce?”

I glanced toward Dolce, who nodded a bit then looked up. “I don't mind. You can flirt with Rokuko as much as you like. Oh, and I'll even keep it a secret from Haku, yes. Indeed. I'll be obligated to tell her if she asks, but I won't go out of my way to say it, so...?”

Well, Haku is definitely going to ask about Rokuko, so that's the same as telling her.

As we traveled north in the carriage Dolce had secured for us, we found a massive sign by the ferry.

The South-North Alliance: if one of us is in trouble, we're both in trouble and will help each other out. Weapons and fighting to the death are

prohibited. Let's keep our fighting clean and fun!

"Uh...? That wasn't there before. Is it new?"

"Yeeees. I heard yesterdaaay that an angry guy living in the souuuuth suddenly realized he didn't actually hate the north that muuuuch, so they made an alliaaance," Neruneh explained.

"Wow."

The last time we visited Donsama I thought that Wataru had escalated tensions between the north and the south, but apparently they overcame it all. Otherwise an alliance like that wouldn't have just popped up.

Incidentally, the sign on the north side called it the North-South alliance. That was pretty heartwarming. Fighting that was clean and fun indeed.

* * *

We left North Donsama without waiting around, and while taking some breaks along the road we made it to Mikan by the end of the day. The city, not the Dungeon Core—big difference. Aaand I was pretty sure I had done ninety percent of the {Teleportation} myself.

"Aaah, good work, Keima. Thanks to you I will be able to spend today in a good mood."

"Think nothing of it..."

In return, though, I was the one who was exhausted.

"So, Aidy! The salad rolls here are amazing. I'll take you to get some," Rokuko said once Dolce was gone, looking proud for some reason.

"Salad rolls? That would be food, I imagine."

"Yup! You soak flour in water, bake it into strips, then wrap vegetables and meat up in them!"

"Hmm. I suppose I shall try some if you recommend it, Rokuko."

In any case, I left guarding the two to Niku and Neruneh while I rested again. *Man, these Divine Pajamas sure are the best.*

"That said, I see all your cities truly are surrounded by these massive walls. Whatever do you do when it comes time to expand? The walls must get in the way," Aidy muttered, having seen them before our final teleportation into the base.

"Well," I said, "there's plenty of farms surrounding the city, so that expansion's already happened."

"Farms? You're raising humans here?"

"Nah, livestock like sheep and pigs."

"Livestock...? What, pray tell, is that?" *Oh, right. Despite being such a big country, the Demon Realm gets basically all its meat by hunting.*

"Livestock are animals like sheep that you raise to get a consistent source of meat and wool and stuff."

“Hm? Why not simply hunt the meat? There is a forest right there.”

“Like I said, people aren’t that battle-hungry here... Y’know, just think of it like a human farm. It’s more efficient to raise them in farms than it is to hunt them down and kill them individually, no?”

“A fair point. I understand completely now.”

The auto-translator was probably causing some problems there, but in the end we came to an understanding.

“Incidentally, where is the fighting? I crave fighting. Shall we go on a picnic and hunt?” Aidy asked, sounding unsatisfied. To someone from the Demon Realm, going days without fighting was probably equivalent to a cleanliness-loving Japanese person going days without bathing.

“Niku, could you duel with her for a bit?”

“Yes, Master.”

But despite me offering up Niku as a sacrifice, Aidy shook her head.

“My body craves blood. I shall duel her, but only if you don’t mind my blade piercing her heart.”

“...Alright, how about you take some extermination quests from the Adventurer’s Guild? The kind that only takes a day,” I suggested. I was pretty sure Wataru and the others had hunted some kind of horned bull the last time we were here.

“Very well. Pup, take me there once I’ve eaten salad rolls with Rokuko.”

“Understood. I know where the Adventurer’s Guild is.”

“Okaaaay, let’s go, Aidy! You can come too, Neruneh,” Rokuko said.

“Ahahaaa. I’m looking forward to those salad roooolls.”

And so the four of them left the room. As for me, I would just be borrowing a bed in the base and... resting...?

On second thought, I feel like Aidy will probably get harassed by adventurers, then kill them. Would that be my responsibility? Er, you know, I’m pretty sure it would be. Haku would force those charges on me without hesitation.

“Hey, wait! I’m coming with!”

Stricken by fear, I left the base and chased after them.

We bought salad rolls at the same stand Ichika had gone to last time. It was my treat for everyone.

“These salad rolls taste amazing. The vegetables in the squishy bread give it a super fresh flavor.”

“I would prefer more meat in it, myself. Perhaps I could make some myself after a hunt.”

Rokuko and Aidy exchanged thoughts on the crepe-esque kebab-esque salad rolls as they walked. Pretty sure they wouldn't be salad rolls if there was more meat than anything, but okay.

"I agree with Aidy. Meat is good," Niku said.

"I wouldn't mind no meaaaat. The sauce is what I really liiike."

Incidentally, I shared Rokuko's thoughts: they were plenty good as they were. There was a nice balance to it, definitely the kind of recipe you would settle on after serving them for so many years.

We walked casually down the farming town-esque city roads and entered the Adventurer's Guild after finishing our salad rolls. A bunch of people glanced our way and looked us over but soon looked back at what they were doing.

"The man stronger than a Hero, and the loli stronger than the man stronger than a Hero...!" came a murmur, which indicated they still remembered us.

Do we really stick out that much...? I guess Niku and I do, since we have our black hair.

"So, where is my prey?" Aidy asked, aching to get to slaughtering. I went ahead to the counter to ask for quests.

"Uh, I'm Keima Goren, B-Rank. Are there any extermination quests we can do? The stronger the monsters, the better."

"Um, let's see... It's a bit far away for a single day, but..."

And so we received an extermination quest for the monsters which would soon be sacrificed to Aidy. There were several of them living near the city.

"Hmm? You get both the information and the payment? This is an excellent place of work, I'd say."

"Sure, but you better kill them all before the day's up."

We had Thunder Boars, King Frogs, and Forest Ogres to deal with. The quests basically said to just hunt as many as possible. As long as we got one of each, it would be fine.

"Ahaha. They're all pathetic small fry, but it's a joy to face so many of them at once. Naturally, you will {Teleport} us there, yes?"

"Yeah, yeah. You may count on me, milady."

"I'll be helpful since I can put their bodies in my {Storage}," Rokuko said.

"Oh, thank you for the help. I plan to hunt more than can fit into my {Storage}."

I brought along Niku and Neruneh too, just to have as many people with {Storage} available as possible. The fact you could put people who knew {Storage} into {Storage} kind of gave you infinite storage space, like a series of matryoshka dolls. Though maybe there was a superior version of {Storage} with more space anyway.

We left Mikan and quickly teleported to our destination.

“Here, I have more bodies.”

“Um, Aidy...? I can’t fit anymore.”

By the time the sun was setting, everyone’s {Storage} was packed completely full. We had the three corpses we needed as a bare minimum, and while things would be different if we only needed ears like we did for wild goblins, the wild orc corpses used for food were just too big to fit too many into {Storage}.

“If only there were more monsters which only needed a part of them cut off as proof. This is the problem with monsters used for both materials and food.”

All of the electrical boars, giant frogs, and forest-dwelling ogres fell before Aidy in single blows. The ogres were probably the deadliest of them all, given how they swung across branches like chimpanzees to attack with their massive bodies, but since Aidy killed them all with a single counter, it was hard to judge just how deadly they really were.

“I feel marginally satisfied, at least. You served well as bait for the monsters.”

“Thank youuu, I suppoosse?”

Aidy praised the blood-splattered Neruneh while casting {Purification} on her.

“Alright, let’s get back. This picnic’s not over until we report to the guild that the quests are complete.”

“Shall we feast with our payment?”

“I think the stores will all be closed now that the sun has seet. We’ll need to eat at the guild’s baaar.”

While Aidy was hunting, Rokuko and I had been wrapped up in the Divine Quilt recovering, so I had plenty of mana for teleporting all five of us back to town. I gave a full, lengthy chant to preserve my mana, then teleported to Mikan.

After giving our report to the receptionist, we took the bodies to the guild’s storage building to deliver them. We plopped them out of {Storage} and put them on the dissection tables. They looked pretty shocked to see a child (and a slave!) like Niku being taken out of {Storage}.

“To think you would finish all three quests in only half a day. I thought travel alone would take a full day, but I suppose I underestimated B-Rank adventurers. And all of them were killed in a single blow. I can say without flattery that you are exceptionally skilled,” the receptionist said.

“We owe it all to this Demon Realm noble. And yeah, she is a noble, so be sure to be polite.”

The second I said Aidy was a noble, the receptionist’s hand froze

above the monsters, but she resumed her investigation quickly.

“They are all extremely high quality. We will buy them all, and after subtracting the examination fee that will be seventy-five silvers. The details are here. Will that be acceptable?”

“In the Demon Realm a hunt of this nature would be mere exercise to wake oneself up. Adventurers in the empire are truly inferior... Oh my. Orc meat is more expensive than I thought. Why is that?” Aidy asked, surprised at the numbers written on the wooden board. She must have thought that it would be cheaper since people were getting so much meat from farms anyway.

“Orc meat is somewhat tastier than lamb, which has raised the price a bit.”

“The sheep I ate earlier today was not at all inferior to orc meat.”

“Well, it’s a very minor difference, and the difference in price is just as minor.”

This is probably a case of everyone having different tastes. It’s not that Aidy’s taste buds are off either. I could hardly tell a difference between the orc meat I ate in the Demon Realm and this lamb. Probably helps that the people of Mikan are probably bored of eating so much lamb.

“I believe the lamb is more expensive than I thought as well. Is that the cost of growing livestock? Mm, if so, I suppose the Demon Realm is fine as we are? Oh, but we could have small-scale farms as well. And use them as bait to draw in monsters,” Aidy muttered to herself.

“Aidy, let’s go buy both and compare them. *If* they have orc meat, that is.”

“Ah. Excellent idea, Rokuko. Comparing the flavors myself will be the most efficient. Shall we go?”

Wow. She really is taking this trip seriously and learning all she can from us.

And so, for dinner we had a meal of both grilled lamb and orc meat, which we compared closely. The difference was so slight I wouldn’t have noticed if nobody had pointed it out, so yeah, it was probably just a matter of taste.

Okay. Today we were finally returning to Goren.

Or to be more precise, we would be teleporting to a base in Tsia, using the tried and true method of me getting us most of the way there before Dolce made the final leap. Reason being that while I knew there was a base in Tsia, I didn’t know where it was specifically, and I had never been there myself.

Once there, we would just use carriages to get the rest of the way. It would be nighttime before we made it home, but who cares? My bed would be waiting!

“Uwooooh! {Teleport}!”

And so I teleported as far as I could over and over. Naturally, we were taking the dangerous short path rather than the safe detour. The view was better, and it was easier to teleport here. I rested to recover all the mana I lost, with Rokuko taking Niku and Neruneh out of {Storage}. Neruneh would then take out a picnic set from her own {Storage} and make a rest spot for us.

“Here you aaare, Masteeer.”

“No no, you can use mine, Keima.”

Both Neruneh and Rokuko offered up their laps as pillows. I turned them down since Dolce was there, which earned me a mocking “virgiiin” from Neruneh, but I ignored her and busted out my beloved [Heavenly Pillow].

I’m exhausted, so yeah, I’m just gonna put on the Divine Pajamas and rest for an hour or so. Let me just set the Divine Alarm Clock to wake me up once my mana’s all back. It sure is convenient that it wakes me up no matter what.

“Aidy. This place is pretty dangerous, so feel free to take down any enemies that come our way.”

“Oh my. You don’t mind? How lovely.”

Some might say it’s rude to ask a visitor to take up guard duty, but it’s fine here since killing things is always a reward as far as Aidy’s concerned.

“I’m not very fond of resting beneath so much sun, but I suppose I have no choice...”

Dolce slumped down beneath an umbrella. We didn’t have any carriages with us since they’d get in the way of teleporting. Yesterday there were still trees and inns along our path, but now we were taking the direct route without any inn towns. The flaw with this route was that despite looking so nice, there wasn’t anywhere to safely rest out of view.

“Master. What should we do?” Niku asked, wagging her tail.

Nothing much, really. Aidy can handle guard duty on her own, so...

“You can play with the others as long as you stay in sight.”

“Okay. My work for today will be training.”

You sure are a hard worker, Niku. I’d be sleeping if I were you.

And so I started napping, with both Neruneh and Rokuko staring at my sleeping face. I woke up to Aidy and Niku cooking meat over a fire, which was a clear sign we had been attacked. *That meat smells pretty nice. Gimme some.*

After several picnics and naps just like that, Dolce performed the final teleportation, and we finally arrived at Tsia.

“Man, we’re finally back...”

“It sure feels like we’ve been gone for a super long time, doesn’t it? I would say about half a year,” Rokuko mused. In reality it was just a month and change, but I understood how she felt.

“I confess to being somewhat elated at the prospect of finally visiting your home base, Rokuko.”

“Want to get in the onsen together?”

“That sounds splendid. Aaah, would you like to join us, Rokuko’s master?”

Er, nah, I don’t go into the girls’ bath. Kinue and the Silkies take care of cleaning it, even.

“As much as I would like to rest first, we should leave soon, since the carriages are waiting,” Dolce said, neither going transparent nor floating away. She would be staying in human form for traveling by carriage. The fact she looked sick was half because she was a Wraith and half because she was suffering from all the mana use.

We climbed into some carriages affixed with the imperial seal, with Dolce leaving the driving to the monster that managed the base. Apparently it was politically important to use imperial carriages here since Aidy was in fact royalty from the Demon Realm.

I was totally drained of mana, so the rocking of the comfy imperial carriage got me all sleepy. Before I knew it my head was resting on Rokuko’s lap and we had arrived at Goren. It was beyond terrifying to wake up to Rokuko and Neruneh smiling brightly and Dolce grinning. *Eep.*

“You sure slept soundly, Keima. Eheheh. I finally got to give you a lap pillow,” Rokuko said casually with a smile, peering down at my face on her thighs.

“U-Uh, Rokuko.”

“It’s fine, I’ll take care of Haku somehow. Okay?”

She gently stroked my head. *More importantly, can we get off now? We’re already at Goren. Please?*

We left the carriage and found all the townsfolk gathered around.

“Yo! Welcome back, town chief!”

“How was the Demon Realm? Who’re the red-haired and blue-haired beauties? Didja grab some wives there?”

“I was like ‘Oh crap’ when I saw that carriage with the imperial seal on it. Good to see it’s just you.”

Hmm. I think I’ll go and kick that second guy in the stomach later.

“Aaaah, home sweet hooome. It feels like the trip ended in the blink of an eeeye.”

“Yes. It was a very productive time,” Niku agreed.

We were back at the town for the first time in forever. It even smelled like home.

Aaah... I made it back home alive!

“Keima, why are you just standing there like you’re getting all emotional?”

“Because I am getting emotional, Rokuko. Not only did I make it

back safe, but I've got the Divine Pajamas now, plus permission to use two more pieces of the Divine Bedding. This the best possible result I could have asked for."

"Well, that's true. Good job."

"Haku didn't cut my head off on sight, either!"

"I told you she wouldn't. You're safe."

Seriously, I didn't expect Rokuko to have grown so much. I might have to admit that she's surpassed even me by now... Especially when it comes to Haku.

"I made it home safe thanks to you, Rokuko. What can I do to thank you?"

"Oh, well, remember those melon rolls filled with tons of cream? I'd like as many of those as I can eat."

"Sure. Eat to your heart's content."

"Yaaaay, you're the best! I'll thank you with another lap pillow later."

Rokuko giggled to herself. *Isn't thanking people for thank-you gifts an endless loop?*

But this really was a productive trip. Not that I would ever want to visit the Demon Realm again. I sure owe a lot to all my subordinates who kept the dungeon and town running while I was gone.

And that was when Gozou—the representative of all the adventurers in town—came walking over.

"Heya, Keima. Wozma went an' told me ye were back. C'mon, we're goin' to the bar."

"Heya, Gozou. What, did another new town pop up or something?"

"Who knows? Ye'll just have to come an' see."

I headed to the bar, where I found Wozma and a bunch of other townsfolk waiting with a prepared feast. Ichika, Kinue, Rei, and the Beddhist nuns were all there too.

"Keima! Welcome home!" they all shouted.

"Whoa! Heya, everyone. What's all this about? Is today some kind of holiday?" I asked.

"Hahaha. We're celebrating your return," Wozma replied with a broad grin. "We thought it would be nice to surprise you for once. I received word of your return ahead of time and contacted the inn to prepare for this. Three cheers for the town chief's return!"

"Cheers!" the townsfolk replied, lifting up their wooden mugs high.

"Oh man. Wow, thanks."

I took the wooden cup offered to me. Inside was juice, not beer—he knew my tastes well. I would expect nothing less from a man who served as both vice chief and bartender.

"I see you are certainly well-loved, town chief," Aidy said with a

tap on my shoulder.

“Oh? And who is this fine young lady? Have you found yourself a new wife, town chief?”

“Hahaha, I’m going to kick the shit out of you, Wozma. She’s here on a diplomatic mission from the Demon Realm.”

“Erk,” Wozma replied, faltering. “I heard nothing about a visitor from the Demon Realm, Keima.”

“Well... I only learned about it recently myself. Don’t worry, I’ll take care of her.”

I might as well, since I’m always loading my other work onto Wozma. Yeah.

“Ah! I have a great idea,” Rokuko said. “We can consider this both a surprise party for us coming home, and a welcoming party for Aidy. How about it?!”

“Erk!”

“Everyooone, this is my friend Aidy, a noble girl from the Demon Realm! She’ll be staying with us for a bit!”

Rokuko’s tone left no room for argument. The townsfolk just kinda went with the flow and lifted their mugs for another cheer.

“Oh my. I suppose I will accept the party, then. Shall we begin the slaughter?”

“No. No, Aidy. Welcoming parties here don’t involve bloody fighting.”

And so, everyone learned that Aidy was a noble girl visiting from the Demon Realm. Oh well. It wasn’t something that important to hide, so whatever.

“Masteer! I missed yooou! Also, what’d you get me? Actually, never mind, it’s probably food. That can wait ’til tomorrow. I’ve got this hella huge feast to chow down on today!”

Ichika came over and gave me a clingy hug. Then she demanded her souvenirs. Then she realized her souvenirs would all be food, and she was right. I had loads of udon for her.

“Man, I wish I coulda gone with you to the Demon Realm. I wish I coulda stuffed my face with tasty Demon Realm food until I burst... Nom nom nom.”

Ichika chugged mugs of beer and started chowing down on the prepared food (which Kinue had prepared the instant she’d learned of my arrival).

Hey, quit it. Don’t wipe your hands on my clothes.

“Ahaha. I forgot how nice it was to be around Ichika.”

“Whoa there, Rokuko. Don’t drink anything, alright? I won’t cast {Healing} on you no matter how much you complain about your head hurting from the hangover.”

“Hmph, fine. I drank a lot in Corky, so I’ll be nice and just drink

juice today.”

I shot Aidy a meaningful glance as well, only for her to respond by chugging from the mug in her hand. *Hello?*

“Fear not, there will be no blackout this time. Did I not mention that last time I was simply playing along with Rokuko? I can choose to not get drunk if I wish.”

Yeah, I guess alcohol is basically the same thing as poison. As a Magic Blade-type Core, she could probably just cancel her human transformation for a split second to nullify its effects.

And so, the feast progressed without a hitch. Kinue added dishes where needed while sometimes serving food alongside the Silkies, who were running around everywhere. She wore a lively expression, and the way she produced fried food instantly with her {Chef} skill made it look entirely like she was using magic. Rei was sitting next to Neruneh at the same time.

“Neruneh. You served Master and Rokuko well, correct?”

“Everything was fiiiine, though Master ended up as a slaaaave.”

“Um, what? Details?”

“I can’t say much more heeeere... Hmmm? Why are you grabbing my haaaands?”

“Master, Rokuko. We will be briefly leaving our seats to get each other up to date. Oh, and once again, welcome home! I am, eeerm, very glad you both returned safely! Farewell!”

...Rei dragged Neruneh away to interrogate her about what had happened in the Demon Realm. *Not surprising.*

“I believe that is enough rest. Would anyone care to dance with me?” Aidy asked, brandishing her Magic Blade and slicing the air.

“Uh.”

I thought that her sudden request for battle would throw people off, but, well, this was a town of adventurers. There were a lot of people more than eager to compare their strength. It sorta resembled the Demon Realm.

“Alriiight, let’s do this thing!”

“Please fight outside. The bar is for eating and drinking,” Wozma called out.

“This is serious business, so use these wooden swords, you drunks.”

Pretty sure the inn’s storage building has a nice stock of wooden swords that Niku uses for practice. They can use as many as they need.

But actually, on second thought, Niku was the strongest fighter in Goren, and Aidy was strong enough to soundly beat Niku. It only made sense that the Goren adventurers who couldn’t come close to touching Niku would be too weak to be worth talking about.

“Whoooo! The heck?! How’s this girl so strong?!”

“No way... My golden slice of death didn’t work on her at all?!”

“That’s just a normal swing, and you’re using a wooden sword, so...”

We did technically have some B-Rank adventurers that had stuck around after the dragon business from a while ago, but they weren’t strong enough to keep up with Aidy, who was powerful enough to be recognized for her battle prowess even in the country of constant violence.

“Absolutely pitiful. Half of you are weak enough that you would be sent straight to the pig pens of one of my farms.”

Incidentally, the pig pens she spoke of weren’t jails, but rather facilities for housing terribly weak humans in human farms.

“Well, this is a town built around a dungeon for beginners and intermediates.”

“I see,” Aidy said, nodding in understanding. She then glanced at Niku. “Battles this trivial will never suffice. Pup, duel me until I am satisfied. I will even restrict myself to using one hand.”

“Perfect. I will use both hands.”

Niku set down her cup of juice and headed to Aidy with wooden swords in both hands.

Thus ended the feast celebrating our return and welcoming Aidy.

Side Chapter — Meeting of the Girl Dungeon Cores

In the midst of a forest was a small, sunny clearing surrounded by trees that rustled pleasantly whenever there was a breeze. A fancy table and chairs were set in the middle of the clearing for a tea party. It was a place for meeting with neighbors that Rokuko had made, inspired by the meeting room Keima and Ittetsu used.

The clearing was located between Tsia city and Tsia Mountain, and Rokuko had invited both Core 219 from the [Flower Garden of Light] and Redra from the [Flame Caverns]. Her goal was to introduce Aidy to them.

When Rokuko arrived at the clearing with Aidy, the other two Cores were already there. The masculine beauty in a suit and the busty beauty in a red dress looked surprisingly good together.

“Oh, wow. You both got here fast,” Rokuko said.

“I would sooner say you were a bit late, Rokuko. I’ve been waiting for quite a bit.”

“Yeah, yeah! You’re gonna have to apologize with some dragon beets!”

“I told you ahead of time I’d be a while since I couldn’t use my dungeon functions to place myself here. Also, I know, I brought you the beets you wanted.”

Rokuko glanced at Aidy to step forward, who quietly obliged.

“This is my friend, Aidy. I thought it would be best to introduce her since she’ll be staying in my town for a bit. I think you already know her from the gatherings, Core 219, but she’s Core 666.”

“A pleasure to meet you,” Aidy said with a smile. She was greeted, however, with a scoff.

“Hah,” Core 219 laughed. “Arriving late and not even apologizing—I would expect nothing less from a princess of the Demon King faction. Do remember that I am a member of the Third Lot, and this dragon here is married to a member of the Second Lot,” she said, crossing her legs and leaning back against her chair with her chin lifted arrogantly.

“Oh my, but I am expressing my respect by coming here and introducing myself, no? Would you rather me speak through my sword?” Aidy asked, unsheathing her true self the fire Magic Blade.

“Ahaha! Aidy, right?! I like you! Let’s go!” Redra laughed, fire

shooting out from her body.

“Hold it, Redra. That’s too hot,” Rokuko interjected.

“Indeed. Please do consider us as well,” Core 219 agreed.

“Ah! My bad, my bad! Didn’t mean anything by it!”

Redra extinguished her flames.

“Joking aside, Rokuko... That girl is of the Demon King faction. Can we truly trust her?”

“I mean, Core 219, did you forget that Redra’s part of the Dragon King faction?”

“No, but... Very well. If you trust her, I shall as well,” Core 219 said with a sigh. She then stood up from her chair and gave an exaggerated bow. “Welcome to our secret tea party, O Princess of the Demon Realm. Do be kind and spare me your blade. Unlike that Dragon, I have quite delicate sensibilities.”

“Hey, hey, hey, Core 219! You’re making it sound like I’m crude and junk! But alright, we can save the duel for later! Come to my place whenever, Aidy! You’re red and I’m pretty sure we’ll get along just fine!”

Aidy smiled in reply to Redra. “I’m quite sure as well. Both you and Core 219 seem quite strong, so while I am unsure if I will be able to contain my excitement for long, I look forward to getting along.”

“...Aidy. You need people’s permission to duel them here, okay? You can’t surprise attack people like in the Demon Realm,” Rokuko warned, detecting that when Aidy said “getting along,” she meant “dueling.” Her advice was right on point—she hadn’t gone to study the Demon Realm’s culture for nothing.

“Naturally, Rokuko. I came to the empire to learn, after all. But have you ever heard the phrase that it’s easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission?”

“Get permission first, Aidy. Promise?”

“If you insist. I promise.”

Rokuko and Aidy both took their seats. The Magic Blade had vanished into thin air at some point.

“By the way, what was with that taunting at the start?” Rokuko asked.

“What can I say? When I heard someone new would be joining us, I was struck by the urge to toy with them. Acting is my specialty, and I’ll apologize if it was hurtful,” Core 219 said while dexterously manipulating vines, still in human form to sip her tea.

“...I see that you are positioning the vines to capture me at a moment’s notice. I would expect nothing less from a Third Lot Core, I suppose. Landing a blow would be no easy feat.”

“Now, now, I’m no fighter. Despite what it may seem, I am a fearful little bird with a heart pounding in terror. I would appreciate

you keeping that murderous gaze to yourself.”

“Oh my, forgive me. It’s simply a habit.”

“Whoa! I’ve never been to the Demon Realm before, but is that how everyone is there?! Sounds pretty fun!”

“Are you looking forward to our date, Redra?” Aidy asked, sipping some of her tea to show her lack of hostility.

“Again, I would kindly ask you to contain yourselves here. This is a tea party for enjoying tea and nothing more. Though we do share a bit of information as well. With that in mind, what say you tell us some tales of the Demon Realm? I would love to hear a Demon Realm story. What plays or the like do you have there?”

“Ah, Rokuko! Where’s the beets?! The beets!”

“Right, right. Here’s your Red Dragon beets.”

“Yees! It’s been so long!”

Aidy gave a bemused smile at Redra’s boundless enthusiasm, then began spinning a Demon Realm tale at Core 219’s request. It was an action story, of course. The protagonist was saved by their truest friend, who refused to let anyone else be the one to kill them, and then they launched right into a life-or-death duel. From Aidy’s perspective it was a truly heart-pounding story, but it didn’t match Core 219’s sensibilities very much. The final half didn’t, at least.

“Say, what are your favorite foods, Aidy?” Core 219 asked suddenly.

“My favorite foods? I’ve never really considered that, but I suppose I often eat udon in the Demon Realm.”

“Oh, would you say that you love this ‘udon’?”

“I’ve never considered whether I like it or not.”

Core 219 gave an exaggerated sigh and faced the sky. “Aaah! What a terrible waste. Human food is the greatest joy of using their human form, you know. That Dragon loves spicy food, whereas Rokuko loves melon rolls. I myself have developed a nuanced taste for tea and wine. Having a favorite food is developing humanity for oneself, and Father is greatly pleased by it.”

“Is that how it works?”

“It certainly is.”

Core 219 let out a sensual sigh. In the past she’d refused to eat since it would produce waste, but by now she had forgotten all about it.

“So, Rokuko. Might I suggest introducing Aidy to the pastries you showed us last time? We certainly need something to eat alongside our tea.”

“Hm? Oh, sure.”

Rokuko manipulated the menu and bought a [Pastry Set (5 DP)] from the catalog. It had come up once before due to it being cost-

efficient with how you got six pastries for 5 DP. You could also choose which pastries you got. This time Rokuko selected a variety pack which included a tea cream roll, a spicy curry roll, a hamburger, a yakisoba roll, and... two melon rolls. One for her, and one to shill to Aidy.

“Here, a tea pastry for you, Core 219. And a spicy one for Redra.”

“Thank you, Rokuko.”

“Yeah! These taste great!”

The two of them took the pastries from Rokuko. Aidy immediately showed interest in them.

“This is interesting wrapping. Do they contain sweet rolls?”

“Oh, just rip from the top and the outer layer comes right off. It helps the rolls not get musty or anything,” Rokuko said while ripping the plastic and taking out the melon roll. The dungeon area beneath absorbed the plastic.

“It blocks water? Perhaps it would be wise to envelop a sword with it... How is the substance made?”

“Who knows.”

“You don’t?”

“Not in the least. Oh, it sometimes melts when next to heat, but sometimes doesn’t. Isn’t that weird?”

“I see, that explains why you wouldn’t know.”

Rokuko used to be only able to produce plastic through buying rolls then peeling the packing off, but as of late plastic had become a normal option in the catalog. Either her comprehension of plastic’s nature had increased, or she’d just started perceiving it as something normal, but either way it was in the catalog now. The increased amount of trash wasn’t a problem since dungeons could eat just about anything. Perhaps her body had learned the nature of plastic due to absorbing it so much.

“I have plenty more where that came from,” Rokuko said, buying different pastries from last time: scones, tuna rolls, chocolate cornets, donuts, sandwiches, and croissants. “Eat whatever you like. They’re all tasty.”

“Certainly.”

Rokuko casually placed the two melon rolls close to Aidy, but Aidy ended up choosing the chocolate cornets.

“This seems the strongest—just look at how it’s twisted into a sharp point.”

“That’s called a chocolate cornet, and... That’s the first time I’ve ever heard anyone call bread *strong* before.”

Aidy peeled off the plastic wrapping and took out the strong-looking chocolate cornet. She lifted it with one hand and twisted it around.

“How does one eat this? From the head? The feet?”

“I don’t think chocolate cornets have heads or feet. Which is which...? Well, just eat it however you like. It’s just a pastry.”

“In other words—don’t think, feel?”

“Exactly. Either way it’s just food going into your stomach,” Rokuko replied. “Do you not think the croissants look strong? They’re twisted and pointed on both sides too.”

“It resembles a boomerang, and I am not particularly fond of ranged weapons. Aha. And this one was called a chocolate cornet, was it? The twists are lovely. Like a spiral staircase... Mm. A splendid shape. To think food could look like this,” Aidy said, grinning at the chocolate cornet.

“I mean, melon rolls look cool too! Just look at the cookie-like outside with the fluffy insides! The incredible sweetness of the melon! I dare say it makes one think of Beddhism’s infamous comfylove!”

“Hm. If the cornet is a spear, then your roll seems to be a shield. It much resembles a round shield. Perfect for all kinds of defense.”

“Defense...? This is the first time I’ve ever heard anyone call a melon roll good for defense.”

Rokuko bit into her defensively-powerful melon roll.

“If we’re talking about strength, then spice is king! These spicy pastries are the best! Though Red Dragon beets are spicier!”

“Ah, but it loses to tea cream pastries in elegance and grace, no?”

Redra and Core 219 engaged in a very bizarre pastry-waving contest.

“I see that Core 219 and Redra both have preferred pastries of their own,” Aidy said, before dropping the hammer. “But if you ask me, the chocolate cornet is undoubtedly the strongest of them all.”

Aidy gave a smug, provocative grin. Core 219 responded with a full smile.

“Hah. Then we shall compare tastes. Rokuko, get pastries for us all. I will cover the DP.”

“I accept your challenge! Rokuko, the pastries, please.”

“Might as well get out as many as you can! Core 219’s paying! Hah!”

“Girls, please...”

Rokuko started to say eating too much would get them sick but then stopped. Redra was a Dragon and wouldn’t be bothered at all, whereas everyone else was a Dungeon Core. They could just withdraw stuff from their stomachs and eat more.

“Today’s tea party ended up being a pastry party, huh...?” Rokuko mused, lining up the loads of pastries onto the table.

And so, after having fun to their heart’s content, the tea party ended and they began their journey home. Rokuko couldn’t move

Aidy with her dungeon functions since she was a Dungeon Core, so they were just walking back to Goren like they had walked to the tea party.

“In the end, the cornet truly was the strongest. Don’t you think so, Rokuko?”

“Drop it. We just ended the fight by agreeing we all had our preferences; don’t drag it back up.”

Despite having just eaten so many, Aidy bit into another cornet.

“...Still, I came with you to meet your friends since you so kindly offered, but I didn’t expect them to be so infamous. Both Core 219 and Core 112 are well known for being skilled Cores,” Aidy said.

“Oh, but aren’t you close with Core 50 yourself, Aidy?”

“Core 50 is my teacher, not my friend. Though I must say, I’m surprised to learn Core 219 is a member of Haku’s faction. I thought for certain she was in Core 7 and 8’s faction.”

Core 7 and 8. They were both Single Number cores, known as the Sea Goddess and Mountain Goddess, respectively. They combined aquatic and mountainous Cores to form a nature faction. It was only natural for a plant-type core like Core 219 to be mistaken for one of them.

“Keep this a secret, okay?”

“Of course. Core 219 emphasized that as well. Your secret is safe with me,” Aidy said with a refined giggle. “And Core 112 is certainly in the Dragon King faction?” she then asked.

“That’s what I’m told, and he stays with them at the gatherings, so probably.”

“So you say, but at the gatherings Core 219... Ah, never mind. I imagine nothing good will come from pondering this. More importantly, you simply must not forget my date with Redra.”

“I know, I know. You’ve said that a thousand times,” Rokuko replied, sighing a bit with exasperation. Aidy truly did love fighting with all her heart.

Side Chapter — Souvenirs from the Demon Realm

Ichika and Kinue

Ichika and Kinue got recipes and ingredients for Demon Realm delicacies in addition to cooked meals put into {Storage} right after being prepared.

“Oho, so this udon from the Demon Realm... I see they kneaded flour and boiled it,” Kinue observed.

“Seems like it’s totally different from empire flour in quality and stuff. We got some Demon Realm flour right here,” Ichika said.

“Weak flour and powerful flour, I believe. They are described as such in the recipes Master brought me.”

Kinue nommed on her udon with a fork while thinking things over based on what she knew. To a house fairy like Kinue, cooking was her second-favorite thing to do, right after cleaning. (Naturally, she was beyond satisfied with her life due to being entrusted with cleaning the inn and inner parts of the dungeon by her Master, Keima.).

Incidentally, Ichika was eating her udon with chopsticks. She had apparently learned to use them so she could eat food meant for chopsticks properly. It was yet another depth that her gluttony had driven her to.

“Demon Realm flour’s in the catalog, yeah? That means we can make udon ourselves if Master’s a bro and buys some for us.”

“I can use my own DP without troubling Master, Ichika.”

“Oh yeah. I forgot you can use it too.”

Ichika was ultimately just a slave, so despite being treated as one of the top dogs of the dungeon, she couldn’t actually use the menu. Which meant she couldn’t buy things with DP. To use DP she had to send word to Keima and have him use DP that was set aside for her purposes—but if she just gave that DP to Kinue instead, she could buy as much food as she wanted without Keima’s oversight. Ichika decided to do that from now on.

“There’s lotsa other ingredients and desserts and stuff here, so let’s just chow down and see how it goes first. Look, this warm, sweet thing is pretty dang good. Demon Realm sweets! Let’s dig in together.”

“H-How is this orange stuff so sticky...? Ah, it’s the color of carrots. That explains that.”

Kinue and Ichika devoured Demon Realm desserts together. They were dishes and sweets one rarely got to eat in the empire. Pretty good for a souvenir. And the fun had only just begun—after this, Kinue would get to enjoy recreating the dishes while Ichika taste-tested those dishes to her heart's content.

Incidentally, they got so into it they ended up eating the portion set aside for the Silkies, and despite the two offering up recreated versions of the dish as an apology, the Silkies didn't forgive Kinue until she gave up some of her cleaning work to them.

Rei and Elka

Rei the dungeon administrator and her fairy subordinate Elka stood together. In Rei's hands was something wrapped in cloth that Niku had given her as a souvenir from the Demon Realm.

"Elka, I received a souvenir from Niku."

"A souvenir, Lady Rei?"

Rei removed the item from the cloth, revealing it to be a beaten-up jersey that Niku had brought back (it was a different jersey than the one with Igni's protection).

"Erm... this is?"

"One of Master's used jerseys. It seems that he had such an active lifestyle in the Demon Realm that she acquired many of them. She is allowing me to have this one."

"I see?"

Elka tilted her head in confusion. She understood it was a jersey that their Dungeon Master had worn, but she didn't really understand the significance of it. But her beloved superior Rei was hugging the jersey to her chest with a happy smile, so she didn't rain on her parade.

"Ahaha. Niku never lets me down. This is quite an excellent specimen. It's thoroughly stained with sweat from the hard labor he did...!"

"That's wonderful, Lady Rei."

"Yes. Yes, it is. Oh, wait... It is only right that I share this joy with you, my subordinate. Which would you prefer? The top part or the bottom part?"

Feeling almost heartbroken, Rei offered one half of Keima's jersey to her subordinate. But Elka did not particularly want either. Rather, she simply couldn't understand why Rei was so overjoyed to have the jersey at all.

"Ah! I just had an excellent idea. I shall give you the jersey that Master gave to me in the past. I will take this new one for myself."

"Oh!" Elka's wings fluttered. "You refer to the one that you turned

into a body pillow, Lady Rei?”

“Yes. I’ve already used it often, but if you would li—”

“I could imagine nothing better.”

Elka nodded quickly. She didn’t care about Keima’s jersey, but one hugged to death by her beloved superior Rei was another matter entirely.

“Very well. I will go switch the jersey on the pillow in my room with this one.”

“Excellent. Thank you very much, Lady Rei.”

The two of them were truly alike, deep down. If you asked where they got that obsessive streak from, well, it would be hard not to look up and identify the Dungeon Core standing at the very top of them all.

Elulu and Igni

“Wow, so this is a Demon Realm toy!”

“It seems... somewhat violent?”

Igni squealed for joy while swinging around a spiked ball and chain that, while made of wood, looked incredibly deadly. Apparently it was considered safe to swing about, but that hardly looked true to Elulu. No doubt people just said that because the tips of the spikes were rounded a bit and it was all made of wood. Safety concerns were much more lax in the Demon Realm since the children were stronger.

“What about this one?! How do you play with this one?!”

“That is a weapon known as a boomerang. If you throw it, it comes flying back to you. L-Like this, I think?”

Elulu lifted the boomerang and threw it. The boomerang wobbled, then fell. It did not return.

“Ahaha! You suck!”

“As I’ve said, I’m a ghost, and we’re not very good with weapons. Though I was a bit of an archer while alive.”

“There’s a bow here too. Though the arrows are shaped kinda weird.”

“The benefit of being a ghost is that I don’t have to worry about the bowstring hitting my boobs, I suppose,” Elulu mused. Though that was countered by her not being able to pull the string well at all anymore.

There were other toys, but the fact they were literally all weapons probably said something about Demon Realm culture.

“Hyah, hyah! Blah!”

Igni stabbed her shotel through Elulu. That was pretty disturbing to her, since although she knew it wouldn’t harm her, the thrusting of the sword reminded her of how she died.

“Um, you can do that since I’m a ghost, but don’t do it to living

people, okay? They'll die. If I was alive, that single stab would have killed me. I'm not joking. Actually, it did kill me, so..."

"I know, I know! If I actually wanted to stab you, I'd {Enchant} it with fire first, duh."

"Please don't?! That would make me disappear, okay?!"

"Uh-huh! You're my friend, so I won't kill you no matter what! And don't worry, you have my protection, so fire won't kill you no matter what either!"

"This is the first time I'm hearing about protection?! And also, I'm already dead!"

Why had Keima ever given this child so many dangerous toys? Elulu let out a heavy sigh and faced the ceiling. All she saw was rocks.

Incidentally, the reasoning behind it was simple. Keima had asked a storekeeper for some toys, and this was all they'd had. He'd had no deep rationale behind it at all. Gimmicky weapons were the only toys the Demon Realm had. They sold very well, since Demon Realm children would play with them until they broke.

Though, well, Ichika wasn't entirely sure the toys really counted as a souvenir for Elulu, so she gave her some Demon Realm sweets later on. Said sweets were then devoured by Rokuko's pets.

Chapter 2

The day after the feast, Aidy left with Rokuko to meet our neighbors. It was important to send word ahead of time before interfering in others' territory.

"C'mon, Keima! At least say something if you're back! Dolce dropped by and we had a purrfectly lovely night drinking, but that was the first time I heard anything about your town holding a party for your return! Grr! Meowzers!" Misha yelled angrily, barging into my office while I was checking over paperwork for the first time in a month. She was the guildmaster of the imperial capital's Adventurer's Guild on a business trip to Goren, and I certainly hadn't told her I was back. Whoops. *Also, what is "meowzers" supposed to mean?*

"Sorry, Misha. I totally forgot."

"It's fine, meow. Dolce saved me some beer and food. I spent the whole time just rolling around in the grand suite eating hamburgers and fish, so yeah, no prob!"

Misha wrapped her arm around my shoulders. *Haha, screw you.*

"So, didja tap Rokuko?"

Hahahahaha ha, screw you. I can't believe she just asked that outright. Are her eyes glowing red because she's using a lie detecting skill? Geez.

"Nope."

"Bwahaha, cowaaaard."

"Would you say the same thing in front of Haku? Huh?"

"Forgive my rudeness. Oh, didja check out a human farm, though? Those places have tons of fun stuff to do."

Human farms? Tons of fun stuff? They seemed like normal towns to me. Though I didn't check out every corner of the place.

"Wait, have you been to the Demon Realm before, Misha?"

"Yuppers. The Adventurer's Guild and the Hunter's Guild work together sometimes, and I've popped over for a visit when I've needed to."

"Misha... You... You actually do your job sometimes?"

"Keima? I am a top-class guildmaster serving the Ivory Goddess herself, y'know? I know I'm so purretty it's easy to forget, but c'mon."

She called herself top-class, but all I could remember was her getting punished over and over again. She must have read my mind or something, because she grabbed my head and started grinding a fist against it. In a way, we were acting exactly like two bros playing

around. All I had to do was forget the two melons rubbing against me.

Misha probably does visit the Demon Realm often, now that I think about it. This up close and personal skinship is something I saw all the time there. I guess sporty people, or like, people who don't sweat the small stuff, are all good fits for the Demon Realm?

"Anyway, good to see you made it back safe and sound. Oh, and I gave all the assassins that came to exploit your absence to Rei after beating the crap out of them, so yeah. Later."

"Cool. Thanks a t—Wait, what?"

Misha casually dropped a bombshell then tried to leave, but I called out to stop her.

"Hold it, hold it, hold it, seriously. Assassins? What?"

"Hm? I mean, you know about the Church of Light's extremist faction, right? Seems like they wanna kill Rei. The Church of Light doesn't recognize other religions, so they're always trying to assassinate other high priestesses."

I actually don't know about the Church of Light's extremist faction, no. Seriously...? Rei's being targeted by assassins...?

"Well, thanks for your help. Seriously."

"Dooon't sweat it, they were small fry. I mean, protecting the town is the actual job Haku gave me, so no need to thank me."

"Still, I owe you one. Thanks."

"Alrighty then, Keima. You can pay me back by giving me that grand suite's bed! My bed back at home is so shitty I won't be able to sleep once I have to go back! So please, gimme it! Or sell it to me! Anything!"

"You drive a hard bargain, Misha. But who am I to turn down a friend? I'll give it to you if you join the Beddhist Church. Oh, and to join you just have to say 'I'll join.' That's it."

"Yes! Count me in! I'll join, oyasuminasai!"

Uh. Is it really okay for one of the Ivory Goddess's subordinates to just up and join Beddhist? I'd said that as a joke, but... Seriously, isn't Misha one of the top dogs of the Ivory Church? Is it just not a problem if she doesn't tell anyone?

"I'll even make an official announcement back at the capital that the Ivory Church and the Beddhist Church are total bedfellows!"

Should you really be saying that? I mean, I guess Haku would stop her if there was any problem with it.

"Oh, I'll even buy your most expensive holy symbol. Do you want the gold straight-up? Or do you want DP?"

"...Gold ones are the most expensive we sell normally, but I could make one of some other kind of metal for you if you want."

"Orichalcum, then! They're good for defense, even though they've got the holes in them."

“Now that’ll be expensive. Actually, I’m not even sure how much I would sell an orichalcum holy symbol for.”

“Wait, you could actually make one...? I kinda just said that as a joke.”

“Yeah, I could make one no problem if you gave me the DP for it. Not sure how many millions of DP that would be, though.”

It would be like making a washer (one of those things you stick underneath screws) out of orichalcum, so, let’s see...

“That’s purrhaps a bit much... Let’s just play it safe and go with mythril.”

And so I sold her one of the mythril holy symbols I had lying around. She bought it for a pretty high price, so I profited off the exchange.

Alright, time to get some details on this whole “Rei is being targeted by assassins” business.

“Fur real, though, they aren’t anything special. You don’t even need my help to see them on your dungeon map the second they show up, and your defenses will work totally fine on them. They probably won’t attack her now that you’re back, too.”

“Really?”

“They picked up on the rumors that the Beddhist pope tamed a dragon, and they were just trying to assassinate Rei to weaken your base while you were gone. Now that you’re back, they’ll probably go after you directly.”

“Uh, I’m going to be targeted by assassins?”

Maybe I should go to the bottom of the dungeon before sleeping from now on.

“Well, as long as I’m here I’ll protect you all no matter what! You can count on me! Meowzers!”

Again: what is “meowzers” supposed to mean?

“Wait, are you not going to take turns guarding the town with Dolce?”

“Dolce is kinda a bad match for the Demon Realm’s princess if she goes nuts. Not that I’m a great match for her either, but y’know.”

It turned out that Wraith bodies were weak to fire, and Aidy was literally a fire Magic Blade. Though Dolce did have equipment to compensate for her weakness. Either way, Misha’s guard duty would be extended for as long as Aidy was here.

There were so many reports for Dolce today that we would be sending her back to the imperial capital tomorrow rather than today.

Later on, I went to the Beddhist church to talk to Rei about the assassins. The seats were all filled, with the church being as busy as ever. There were some people standing in front of the bookshelves and reading. Everyone I could see was in fact a Beddhist... *Man, I’m one to*

talk, but I'm really surprised Beddhism caught on as much as it did.

"Ah, town chief. Oyasuminasai."

"Ain't you the pope? Didja come here to sleep? Sorry, the seats're all filled."

"Just gotta read and wait for my turn to nap. What a great day off...! Oh, the pope. Oyasuminasai!"

Seems like my faithful flock are having pretty fulfilling lives. But seeing how packed this church is, I might want to expand the place a bit. Can't exactly tell everyone to go to Dragg's church, so yeah.

But right, the assassins came first. I passed through the busy chapel and found Rei, sitting in a break room chair in her nun outfit. Her massages required appointments now, and she was in the middle of a break. Nobody was around. Better now than never.

"Rei, got some time? There's something I want to talk about."

"Ah, yes. What is it, Master?"

"I heard you were being targeted by assassins. Misha mentioned it."

"Aaah... Yes. Misha effortlessly beat them on her own and nothing bad came of it, so I forgot about them entirely. But yes. It seems I'm being targeted."

Geez, Misha's something else... She took down the assassins so easily everyone just forgot they existed.

"Well, uh. Sorry about this. I never thought you'd be targeted like that."

"Oh, think nothing of it. It's not like me dying is a permanent thing anyway. I'm a Named monster and you could use the revival function on me, so... It would be a bit expensive DP-wise, I suppose."

"Oh yeah... I kinda forgot about that whole thing."

Rei's view held a lot of weight considering she had been revived after Leona killed her before.

"So, what happened to the assassins?"

"Misha and Suilla tortured information out of them, then after taking care of some things gave them to me. I'm keeping them as DP pets in the underside of the dungeon. Their income is fairly high."

By underside of the dungeon, she meant the hidden space beneath the town where we were stealthily imprisoning criminals. It seemed that Rei was keeping the assassins there with Elka and feeding them just enough that they didn't die. It would probably be good for my mental health to not think about what she meant by "after taking care of some things."

"As for what we learned, they're part of the Church of Light's dark underside."

"I heard that from Misha, too. The Church of Light, huh...? Religions sure are scary."

“Master? We’re the Beddhist Church, remember?”

Good point. And we’re newbies on the scene without much history or background. We have Haku’s Ivory Church backing us up, and if you want to be fair, you could say we have a dark underside we can’t tell people about either. I’m not in any position to talk about religions being scary.

“In any case, on a personal level, I’m very grateful for the assassins since they’re letting me better satisfy my vampiric instincts.”

“...Right. They’re officially dead as far as anyone knows, so you don’t need to worry about drinking too much and accidentally killing them.”

“Exactly. Beddhist teachings say that it is important to ‘rest in peace.’ I will drain them over a long, long time without hurting them much!”

What can I even say here? I don’t remember writing that. If I did, I forgot.

“Anyway, let’s go ahead and boost your combat potential. For now I’ll let you use my sword. It’s great at stopping enemies even if you don’t have attack power. While we’re at it, I’ll go ahead and give you {Sleep Resistance}.”

“Wait, you don’t mind?”

“I’ll be taking the sword back once we think up some other plan for you, but it’ll do for now.”

I handed Rei my beloved sword—Siesta, the Blade of Afternoon Naps.

As for my own combat potential, well, I’ll be fine with my magic. I can just buy a {Sleep} scroll later to use as a stand-in for Siesta. Shouldn’t be too expensive since it’s a low-rank Darkness spell. Though... I had Suilla the head nun cast {Sleep} on me experimentally before, but Siesta was the one who ended up having a good nap. They just have some natural sleepiness, I guess? That’s Siesta for you.

“...!”

“Hm? What’s up, Siesta?”

“...! ...!!!”

“Nah, you’ve gotta help me out here. I’m counting on you to protect Rei. Alright?”

“..., ...!”

“Yup. I’ll be just fine. I mean, my {Sleep} won’t even compare to yours, but I’ll survive. Gotta do at least this much to make sure my friends are safe.”

“.....”

“Uh-huh. Thanks for worrying about me.”

Siesta reluctantly agreed to do it.

“Um, Master? Were you talking to Siesta... the Magic Blade? Ah, was it telepathic communication?”

“Hm? Oh, yeah. Siesta was saying they didn’t want to leave me. Not with words, but you know.”

“...!”

“Hahaha. You sure are a tsundere, Siesta.”

“...Um, could you make it so I can hear Siesta as well?”

“Hm? Pretty sure this is a wide-range telepathic conversation. Right, Siesta?”

“.....”

“You heard ’em.”

“Sorry, but I didn’t. What is with your language functions, Master? I simply don’t get them at all.”

Well, Siesta is harder to read than Niku, at least. Yeah.

Incidentally, Siesta had said that they didn’t want to leave me since Misha had said that I would be targeted next, and that putting me to sleep was an important job for them. *Hahaha, what a sweetheart. But, well, I have {Ultra Transformation}, and I’m pretty confident I won’t die so easily.*

“Think I’ll go ahead and ask Rei to do mass for me as well. I’ll stay locked up in my room to guard against the assassins.”

“Ah. Okay. Ummm, I-looking forward to working with you, Siesta?”

“.....”

“Whoa. Lucky you, Rei. Siesta doesn’t take a liking to everyone. I guess you are their senior here in the dungeon business.”

“Wh-What? Did they say something? Why am I lucky?”

“They said they’ll listen to what you say. Siesta, seems like you’ll have to make yourself more clear for Rei to understand you. Can you use mana to make yourself shake or something?”

“...!”

“Eep! Wow, it shook! I can’t believe you’re actually communicating with a sword, Master.”

“Whoa, were you doubting me? Of course I can talk to Siesta. They’re my sword, y’know?”

“I mean, I didn’t hear Siesta’s telepathy or see them move at all...”

And so, I lent Siesta to Rei the High Priestess to help her defend against assassins. Now it was time for me to think up some plans as fast as possible to get Siesta back on my hip.

★ ★ ★

It occurred to me there was someplace else I needed to inform about Aidy’s visit—Dragg, the town next door. Given that I had just told Wozma yesterday that I’d take care of all this Aidy stuff, it was probably important for me to go there myself.

“Alright, Niku, Ichika. Got the Golem Beets to give them?”

“Wait, were those not our snacks...? Kidding, kidding. We got the stuff right here. Right, Niku?”

“Yes, we have them.”

“Alright. Let’s go, th—”

“Lady Kurooooo! Please let me come tooooo!” came a cry right before we left for the entrance to the tunnel through Tsia. I turned to see the daughter of the Tsia family, Maiodore, standing behind us breathlessly. Her maid gave an elegant bow.

Oh yeah... I needed to tell Tsia we were back too. I just remembered.

“...Lady Mai. Good to see you again.”

“Oh, yes. It’s been far too long, Keima. I waited in my family’s mansion at Tsia the entire day believing that you would come visit us, yet you never came. How cruel. Did you forget that I am Lady Kuro’s, or rather, Kuro’s fiancée? Well, regardless... I restrained myself from barging in yesterday since I was sure Kuro was tired from her journey. You were riding a carriage with the imperial seal, after all.”

Oh yeah, Maiodore’s engagement or whatever with Niku is still a thing. She’s standing next to Niku and holding her hand like it’s the most natural thing in a world. Her dissatisfied pout turned to a shy smile in half a second. The tiny wings on her back are flapping, too.

“Thus I came to visit first thing this morning. Do you not think I am quite the exemplary fiancée, Keima?”

“Well. I appreciate the consideration, for sure.”

“In conclusion, I would like to accompany you today. It seems that you are about to leave for Dragg, correct? Please do allow me to join you.”

“Sure. I had some stuff to tell you, so we can talk while we walk.”

My initial plan had been to be seen entering the tunnel as an alibi before using dungeon functions to move where I wanted to go, but it was a good idea to talk to Mai about both Aidy and the Divine Bedding. *Want some souvenirs from the Demon Realm? Here, have a completely useless tapestry.*

“What?! Y-You were given an audience with the emperor and rewarded for your deeds? What in the world did you mess up?”

All I did was say what happened, but this loli made it sound like I had made some huge mistake. *Excuse me? I wouldn’t have been rewarded if I messed something up. Though I did end up as a slave for a bit...*

“I just put together a report on what I learned there.”

“I wrote it,” Niku chimed in.

Yep, since I don’t know how to write. The auto-translator lets me read, at least.

“Lady Kuro, that’s incredible! To think you wrote a report so significant the emperor rewarded you directly!”

“I was useful to Master. I now have the strength to fight for an entire year,” Niku said proudly. Maiodore watched on with a loving look.

When you look at them like this, they sure do look like an engaged couple. Though they're both lolis, and Niku is wearing a maid outfit.

“So yeah, now I have the right to borrow the empire’s Divine Bedding when I need them.”

“Ah, which means you wish for we of the Tsia House to prepare to lend you the Divine Pillow when necessary?”

“Yep. I’ll come to negotiate each time I need it. But, well, we can discuss the details when the time comes.”

“Very well. I will think of a proper price for it,” Maiodore replied. She was a noble, so despite being a child she was pretty quick on the uptake.

Anyway, we reached the exit to Dragg on Pavella’s side of the mountain while talking about what we’d brought back from the Demon Realm. Ichika and Niku hid their faces with masks.

“Erm, why are Ichika and Lady Kuro wearing such unusual masks?”

“Ichika actually comes from Pavella, and there’s a lot of people she might not want to meet here. As for Kuro...”

“It looks cool,” Niku said, surely giving a cool smirk beneath her mask (or, well, she was probably expressionless under the mask too, but you know. It’s the thought that counts).

“You heard her.”

“Oh my... How lovely! Shall I have my maids wear similar masks as well?”

“No? I don’t think there’s any point when they’re not hiding from anyone.”

Maiodore’s maid nodded quickly in agreement. To think that even a noble would get so blinded just because her fiancée liked something... Anyway, we were at Dragg.

“Ah, Keima! Good to see you, my father-in-law!”

Cid, the son of Pavella’s archduke and the town chief of Dragg, welcomed us at the chief residence. I replied while pondering why there were so many children gathered in a place like this.

“Heya. Also, I’m not your father-in-law, Cid. Didn’t your request get turned down?”

Cid had asked to marry Niku earlier, and since she conveniently was already engaged to Maiodore I had managed to deflect him to Bonodore... who had then refused him.

“Hahaha, no need to play it tough... Oh, Lady Mai’s with you. Nice seeing you.”

“Lord Cid? What is all this about a father-in-law?” Maiodore asked

with a threatening smile.

“Ah. Did I not mention it? I asked Lady Kuroinu for her hand in marriage—”

“I AM LADY KURO’S FIANCÉE! You wish for me to cancel the engagement and hand her over? To House Pavella, of all houses? I can already see the struggles Lady Kuro will go through! No! Never! I will not allow this to happen!”

“No, see, you and Lady Kuro can marry like normal, then I will be Kuro’s second wife. I’ve already obtained the potion I need,” Cid said with an exasperated shake of his head.

“Are you insane? Has House Pavella lost it? That potion is incredibly expensive.”

“Well, I expected to be turned down in any case. House Pavella is close to the Holy Kingdom, and as a result there is quite a significant amount of racism toward demihumans here.”

“Really?”

“Hm? You didn’t know, Keima? It’s sad but true. I consider it foolish myself, but culture is not so easily changed.”

It seemed that was why House Tsia wanted to reject Cid’s engagement in the first place. Avians in particular were on shaky ground as far as the Holy Kingdom’s Church of Light was concerned, since they resembled angels (apostles of the Light God) so much. There were ongoing debates about whether they were the descendants of angels or fallen corrupted angels.

“Sounds like a pain in the ass,” I said.

“Indeed. Quite a pain in the hindquarters,” Mai agreed.

“Yes. It’s a pain in the neck indeed. But in any case, Lady Mai, that is what I meant. I have an excess of sex-switching potions now, so just say the word if you need any. I owe Keima much and am willing to offer them for free. Or rather, I would love to offer them for free.”

“For free, hm...? Sigh. I understand your circumstances. I will consider it for your sake,” Maiodore said with a sigh.

Mm, these two sure don’t talk like kids, huh? You would think it’s two adults negotiating. Honestly, they would be a pretty good match for each other if not for their family circumstances. Niku on the other hand... is staring at a corner of the ceiling, bored despite supposedly being the center of all this. Is there a ghost-type monster there...?

“So, Keima. You had something to discuss as town chief?”

“Ah. Right. The truth is, a representative of the Demon Realm is visiting Goren to learn about our culture. Thought I’d send word about that ahead of time.”

“I see, a Demon Realm rep—What? From the Demon Realm? What in the world are you planning here, Keima? It’s hard to say whether House Pavella can be moved to participate in a full-scale rebellion. Is

House Tsia agreeing to this?” Cid asked, standing up from his chair abruptly in shock. Where was all that about a full-scale rebellion coming from...?

“The Laverio Empire welcomed her here, to be clear. There’s nothing fishy going on.”

“Indeed. She is here on official government business. There is no mistaking it,” Maiodore added, which helped Cid calm down. He sat back in his chair.

“G-Good, then... I thought the only reason one would bring someone from the Demon Realm to this distant corner of the empire would be simply to strike back against the country.”

You think I would ever do something that would get me killed ten times over like that?

“You aren’t planning on launching a surprise rebellion after setting the stage through legal means, are you?”

“Just how little do you trust me, Cid?”

Did I do something to completely lose his trust like that? I would’ve thought that I had earned a lot of affection points from all my friendly behavior.

“Rather, I will be rushing to join your side in such a scenario. It only makes sense I would want to plan ahead, no?”

Oh. I earned too many affection points, I see.

“Don’t worry. I’m not planning to rebel against the empire. In what world would any rebellion succeed?”

“Very well. That said... I believe such a world would be the one where you lead the rebellion, Keima.”

Now that’s putting too much faith in me. Should I go out of my way to lower my affection points with him a bit...? Either way, I’ve told him about Aidy. Dragg shouldn’t be involved with what happens next either way.

Anyway, he held a sizable feast for lunch to welcome us, so the plan was to clean house and eat all of it. Wasting his food like that should lower his affection by a bit. My two masked maids would be a bit helpful here.

“Nom nom, nom nom...”

“Girl, this food is hella tasty too. Check it out.”

“Mm. Nom nom...”

“Lady Kuro, you are devouring the food with such vigor... Blush!”

“Indeed. Her vigor makes me glad I prepared this feast.”

...Well, Cid kinda grinned happily while watching Niku eat all the fish, but still. His affection points probably plummeted from all this. For sure. Maybe. Okay, no.

* * *

As for where Aidy would be staying, we settled on her sleeping in

Rokuko's room for the first two nights. The grand suite was in the process of being occupied by Misha. That said, her staying in Rokuko's room was not a long-term solution.

Not to mention, if I assumed that Haku's subordinates would be coming at regular intervals to check up on us, then she would really want her own room. It was a bit suspect whether there was much point in running an inn anymore now that Goren town was providing DP on a wide scale and I had my own room in my chief residence, but the Dancing Doll Inn was where Goren had started. I wanted to give it the respect it deserved.

"Should I make another grand suite? Nah, I think a guest room would be better."

All the rooms in the inn were absolutely packed. Adding space by digging underground was an option, but that was no place for a grand suite, and I didn't want to force our valuable customers to stay in essentially the basement. Only Dolce would like to stay in a dark room like that. Thus, I decided to build and attach the chief residence to a new side building.

With that decided, after putting Dolce into {Storage} and sending her back to the imperial capital through the [Ivory Beach], I started clearing space for construction next to the chief residence.

"Oh my, town chief. What might you be doing?" Aidy asked while I was making a barrier out of rope. She was calling me "town chief" here rather than "Rokuko's Master."

"I was just thinking about where you'll be staying. The current plan is to build something here."

"Oh my, are you sure? I certainly wouldn't mind staying in the same room as Rokuko. It's quite pleasant there, and I must say I enjoy spending the nights with a friend."

"Trust me when I say that'd be more than enough to piss Haku off." *She would probably grumble about how she wants to spend a full month sleeping with Rokuko too.* "Anyway, I'll hear your requests if you have any. What kind of room do you want? I can base most of it off Rokuko's room, I guess. You can have the same furniture as her and stuff."

"Oh my... In that case, I would like a bed that would not be cut or burned by my true form. The bedding Rokuko uses is quite nice, absolutely, but it is for humans. Do you have any bedding similar to that which would not be cut or burned if I slept in it outright?"

In other words, she wanted to sleep in her Magic Blade form.

"Something that I can sink into... that covers me completely... Something like that. Oh, and having fire resistance will only make it better."

"That bedding definitely doesn't have fire resistance... You didn't

burn it to ashes, did you?"

"I wouldn't make such an amateurish mistake. If I caught fire from simply napping, would I have not burned Rokuko as well?"

How can one even be an amateur in this context? Well, whatever. Good to know Rokuko didn't catch on fire.

"I would certainly like similar bedding with fire resistance. I imagine you could use alchemy to enchant the material with the resistance."

"Enchant? You can enchant things with alchemy?"

"It is a fundamental part of alchemy, even."

I had no idea. I thought you just made magic tools with it.. Wait, maybe cloth that doesn't catch fire is considered a magic tool all on its own?

"There is such a process where you make vague the boundaries of an object and move only its attributes... Is that not common in the Laverio Empire?"

"Interesting. The only thing I know about is drawing magic circles and letting loose."

"It is difficult to tell whether your empire's alchemy is further advanced or simply archaic. Perhaps this is due to your Hero Workshop or whatever it is monopolizing all the technology. I witnessed some of its products at the castle, and they were truly incredible," Aidy said. If I remembered correctly, the Hero Workshop made magic tools that produced a single sheet of A4 paper when fed materials, a pen that never dried up, pots that didn't need heaters, and so on. I saw them at the imperial capital.

Oh yeah, and Leona had that {Ultra Alchemy} skill or whatever. Wonder if these two things are related... Maybe the Hero Workshop is Leona's Workshop? Okay, let's stop this. No point thinking about it. Haku would probably tell me if I asked, but she'd tell me things I'd be better off not knowing, too. That'd be scary.

"Ah. What about your maid? She studied alchemy in the Demon Realm, so surely she knows how to enchant objects with sturdiness and fire resistance."

"Hm? You mean Neruneh? Good point... I wonder where she is right now."

I checked the map and saw that she was at our town's smithy.

"The smithy, hm?"

"He's the son of the smith we met at Corky. He does some alchemy too."

"Fascinating. Would you care to guide me there?"

"Sure."

I took Aidy with me to Kantara's smithy. There we found them reading one of the books Neruneh had brought back with her from the

Demon Realm.

“Heeey, Neruneh, Kantara.”

“Woowow, this is something eeeelse.”

“Ohoho, not bad... Heh.”

The two of them were focused on the book.

“It seems there’s even an experimeeent for making Magic Blaaaades.”

“Yes... This’ll be a huge boon fer my research. Look! A magic tool fer shootin’ fireballs! Those exist?! Seems like they’d be real mana inefficient.”

“Wouldn’t it be cool to have a sword that shoots out firebaaaalls?”

“Hell yeah! You know what’s up...!”

“Hellooo? Neruneh? Kantara? Can I get a nod or something? You’ve got visitors.”

The two of them were getting giddy over the book. They were surprisingly focused on it.

“Neruneh! Kantara! WAKE UP!”

“Oooh, Masteeer? And Aiiiiidy?”

“Nm? Ah, Keima! And that girl next t’ ya... Oooh! The Demon Realm girl!”

The two of them finally noticed me once I raised my voice. Kantara looked at Aidy and grinned beneath his bushy dwarf beard. Aidy put on a polite smile for him.

“This is a noble from the Demon Realm here to study our culture.”

“My name is Aidy. Greetings, I am from the Demon Realm.”

“I-I be Kantara. Erm, well, yer from the Demon Realm, huh? Er... Sorry, me words be a bit crude.”

“Indeed. And do not worry about your speech. You may speak as you like.”

“Thank ye,” Kantara said, fidgeting uncomfortably.

“What’s up, Kantara? Gotta piss? It’s not strange at all to suddenly notice you’ve gotta piss after a long time of focusing.”

“Nah, y’see, the Demon Realm’s real advanced with Magic Tools and stuff, yeah? I was kinda wonderin’ if she’d be willin’ to teach me some stuff. I was just in th’ middle of Neruneh teachin’ me sommatha stuff she learned there. Eeer, so, whaddaya say, miss?”

“I see. I find it admirable to abandon one’s pride to dedicate oneself to personal growth. Very well, I shall give you whatever advice comes to mind. Let’s see... You, maid. Would you kindly demonstrate the process of enchanting material with sturdiness and fire resistance? You *do* know the process, yes?”

“Oooh? You don’t miiind?”

“I said I do not, and thus I do not. Isn’t that right, town chief?”
Neruneh and Aidy looked my way. Well, why not?

“Alright then. How about trying to give this mattress the enchantment? It’s best to learn through action.”

“An excellent idea, town chief,” Aidy said with a smile upon seeing me take out the mattress.

“Uwooooh, fer real?! I owe ye everythin’! Keima, I’m gonna borrow the girl for a bit.”

“Yup. Feel free.”

There was no reason for me to refuse when Aidy herself was willing to help. Rather, I wanted this to happen so my town’s smithy would get even better at his job.

“In these parts, we’d be usin’ this magic circle here. Me alchemy teacher taught me it.”

“I see. You learn through oral tradition, then. In the Demon Realm, we learn through textbooks.”

“Textbooks? Sure would like to get me hands on one o’ them...”

“Town chief. Did you not buy one as a souvenir?” Aidy asked. Kantara glanced my way. Now that she mentioned it, I sure had. Though it had been a bit expensive.

“Just be sure to give it back to the church when you’re done.”

“UWOOOOH! I owe ye my life! Thank ye, thank yeeee!”

Kantara looked on the verge of breaking out into a happy dance.

“Masteeer? What about meee?”

“You went to the Demon Realm with me. I mean, weren’t you just teaching Kantara yourself?”

“Oooh, riiight.”

Man, Neruneh’s so ditzzy it’s hard to tell when she’s joking or not.

“Good for you... Oh? I thought this furnace was simply an embarrassment, but if my eyes do not deceive me, it appears there are Phoenix eggshells inside.”

“Oh! Ye can tell, girl? It’s true, it’s got some Phoenix eggshells this here Keima got me! Best furnace I could ever ask for!”

“Oh, he did? I would like some too,” Aidy said with a glance my way. I still had tons of the stuff stashed away, so I wouldn’t even mind giving them away for free, but... If I just agreed to her every demand, I got the feeling the demands would never stop, so I went ahead and turned her down.

While Aidy was helping make the durable, flame-resistant mattress in the smithy, I finished making the side building.

The building fit the land I had sectioned off exactly, and I had built it in the Master Room with {Create Golem}. When putting it in place I had the Silkies set up a tent with no ceiling to ward off prying eyes. I then arrived as Narikin with my mask on and set it in place.

It was the perfect disguise. *Behold, as I pull away the curtain and*

reveal an entirely new building!

Well, people passing by instantly freaked out after seeing a new building that hadn't been there yesterday, but that was par for the course when it came to that ol' Narikin building things. The fuss settled down with people saying things like, "The town chief again, huh?" "You never know what's coming with the town chief." "Yeah, I knew it was him. It's always the town chief." No problem.

"...To think that you actually did build it," Aidy said, arriving at the building with a crimson mattress in her hands.

"Hey, Aidy. I see you finished your mattress, too."

"Indeed... It has just enough durability and fire resistance to last. It would have been much better if only you had lent me the Phoenix eggshells," she replied while blinking and giving the building another look. "I truly did not expect you to build an entire house so quickly. Did you use DP?"

What can I say? Finishing work early so you can sleep sooner just makes sense.

"Nah, one of Haku's magician friends named Narikin built it for me."

"The empire truly is formidable at times, I suppose..."

Aidy seemed to be reading a bit more deeply into this construction than I'd expected, but whatever. No point worrying about it.

"Anyway, now you have a place to sleep. Just stick that mattress into the bedroom. It's completely ready, if you want to try it out."

"Yes, I believe I'll sleep here tonight to see how it is."

"Alright, well, you'll know which bedroom is yours by the metal plates I fixed everywhere to stop the place from catching on fire."

"Very well."

Aidy entered the building with her flame-resistant mattress.

Incidentally, she seemed to quite like both the mattress and her room. She would pay for the mattress when she got back home. *Thank you for your patronage.*

* * *

"Rokuko, I would like to see your dungeon," Aidy said at dinner after inviting Rokuko to her side building.

"Um."

"Did you not hear me? I would like to enter your dungeon and see how it has been constructed. Consider it a form of observation."

"Wh-Where's all this coming from, geez! Aidy, you pervert!" Rokuko cried, swinging her hands around and blushing.

"Pervert? Is this perverted? What do you think, town chief?" Aidy asked while sticking her chocolate cornet into her beef stew and chewing it down. I thought of my response while being a little grossed

out by that combination.

“I don’t really see how it’s perverted, I guess?”

“Keima, you dummy! I-It’s so embarrassing! The dungeon is my body, remember?!”

Oh, I guess she’s speaking from a Dungeon Core’s perspective... Wait, no. If that were the case, surely Aidy would feel the same way, as a fellow Dungeon Core.

“You don’t mind bathing with her, but you’re embarrassed to show her your dungeon?”

“I mean, we’re both girls. Those two things are completely different.”

Huuuh. I don’t get it.

“It’s quite fine, Rokuko. I will be satisfied just going as far as the adventurers do.”

“...You promise? I won’t show you the underside. And you have to come with Keima,” Rokuko said, blushing and fidgeting while looking my way.

“Guess we should bring Misha with us too.”

We’ll want someone there who can stop Aidy if she tries to force her way to the back.

“Nmm, and I’ll need to make Kinue clean up first,” Rokuko added.

“If Aidy wants to observe the dungeon, shouldn’t she see what it’s normally like? No polishing it up just for her?”

Cleaning up sounds like an enormous pain. Not that I’d be the one doing it.

“I-It’s just polite to clean it up a little bit. Like, embarrassment aside, I don’t want my friend to see me all dirty.”

“Aaah... Yeah, understandable. Makes sense.”

“Oh, but I wouldn’t mind seeing you dirty at all.”

“I would! I’m cleaning up! Let me just message Kinue!”

Yeah, if Rokuko considers the dungeon her body, then cleaning it up is basically like her taking a shower. Seems like Rokuko’s a bit of a clean-freak.

“Tell her to make sure no adventurers see her, alright?”

“I know, I know!”

And so it was decided a dungeon tour would be held by a Dungeon Core, for a Dungeon Core.

The next day, Aidy and Rokuko gathered in front of the [Cave of Greed], along with Misha and I. The tour would consist of just the four of us.

“Ahaha. At last I will be going inside of you, Rokuko.”

“Thank you ever so much for gracing me with an invitation, Rokuko!”

Aidy was giddy with anticipation and Misha seemed excited enough, but Rokuko was awkward and stiff.

“I’m kinda nervous...”

This probably felt like an embarrassing school trip to her, with her guardian stand-in (Misha) and an exchange student (Aidy) getting up close and personal in the showers. I could understand that.

With all of us gathered, we went straight into the dungeon. We first passed through the entrance gate manned by members of the Adventurer’s Guild. When the Guild had first come here it had been a simple wooden fence, but with more people and influence gathered in Goren, there was now an actual gate staffed by multiple Guild members.

We showed our adventurer cards to get in. They would stop any non-adventurers from going in, including those who lacked a high enough rank, but both Rokuko and I were B-Ranks, and Misha was an A-Rank. As for Aidy... Well, she was being treated as a valued guest, and really, even if she weren’t, anyone would be let through the gate with Misha, the imperial capital’s guildmaster, around.

“Actually. Aidy, are you an adventurer too?” Rokuko asked.

“My understanding is that one’s hunter rank in the Demon Realm is treated as the equivalent adventurer’s rank here, so... I suppose that would make me B-Rank?”

“Purrfect, then. You’re all the same rank. A B-Rank there is a B-Rank here.”

So this dungeon tour group is actually a top-tier party consisting of B-Ranks at the minimum. Man, what a waste on our humble beginner dungeon.

In any case, we passed through the gate without issue. Misha just casually introduced us and the guards let us in with a bow.

“Should we frame Misha’s signature and put it up on the inn? It’s kinda late for this, but it might be a good idea to emphasize that the Adventurer’s Guild is supporting our inn.”

“Ahaha! My signature’s expensive, bub. I’ll charge you a whole purin for each!”

That’s cheap. Hah, I’ll take care of it later.

But yeah, we entered the stone-paved entrance area.

“I see... So your dungeon truly is a cave-type. How cute. Consider me especially interested, given that mine is a mansion-type.”

“Eek... It’s embarrassing, don’t look at it so closely...”

Rokuko’s words sounded so lewd because this dungeon was Rokuko’s real body, and a fellow Dungeon Core was looking right at it. This was probably equivalent to Aidy and Misha both staring closely at her naked body or something... Which would indeed be humiliating.

"Ah, Rokuko! Mind if I lick your walls around here, meow?"

"Misha? I'm going to tell Haku."

"Sorry! Just a joke!"

Okay, that was going too far... That was like saying "Mind if I lick your armpit?" or something.

"Ah, Aidy. There's a pitfall there. Watch out."

"Oh my... I didn't notice. Hmm?"

"Aaah, these pitfalls... Talk about nostalgia, meow. My precious minotaurs..."

Now that she mentions it, they sure did fall for these pitfalls a lot during that first Dungeon Battle. They were just normal pitfalls with thin boards hidden among the stone floor. The goblins weren't heavy enough to break the boards, which ended up making them extra deadly.

"So, Rokuko. Would you care to explain these pitfalls to me?" Aidy asked.

"Should I, Keima?"

"Visitor or not, I don't think we should be explaining our dungeon tricks to anyone. We'll explain stuff even adventurers would notice, but anything more than that you should figure out yourself."

"You heard him. Sorry, Aidy, but that's how it has to be."

"Very well, I suppose. Just give me a moment... Hm. Some can be sensed while others are hidden, making it even more difficult to identify than normal. Some are false and others are... No, are all of them real, like light and the shadows they cast? Very informative. Though I don't know how you made them."

Aidy put on a serious face and dissected the tricks while patting the stone pitfalls. When she said "some can be sensed," she meant the ones made by the dungeon function, while those she couldn't sense were those I had made myself. Could it be that traps made with the dungeon function emit some kind of message or something?

As I pondered that, Rokuko shook Aidy's shoulders with blushing cheeks. "Okay! That's enough! Let's move on, okay?! Don't look so much, it's embarraaassing!"

This would be like someone staring at the inside of your mouth, I guess. When we get deeper, maybe it'll be like a camera observing the stomach?

"My my. Your place here is pleasant to the touch and ever so cute. Don't you agree, Haku's cat?"

"Yuppers! Rokuko's stone is top-class just like I expected. I could just wrap myself up and sleep right on them..."

"Misha, do you think Haku will show you mercy?"

"Sorry! It was just a joke!"

After they observed Rokuko's entrance (her literal entrance, don't

read too deeply into that), we advanced further down to the labyrinth area.

Incidentally, we walked right by the monsters. It made sense the Goblins would avoid attacking a party consisting of B-Ranks and above. They sensed us and watched from afar, but either way these two didn't need much of an explanation for that. Even if the monsters did attack us, it would just be a waste of DP.

"This is the labyrinth area, but we prepared a special route straight to the exit just for you, so let's go."

"Oh my, what a shame. This would have been an excellent opportunity for some mapping."

"N-No, no mapping! This isn't a Dungeon Battle or a Dungeon Attack!"

That's embarrassing to you? Eh, I guess I get it. I wouldn't want my body mapped out either. Hmm. But they don't mind adventurers exploring the dungeon traditionally. Hmmm. Yeah, never mind, I don't get Dungeon Cores.

At most, I guess it would be similar to being embarrassed to wear a swimsuit when not at a pool or audition? With a Dungeon Battle being like a swimsuit exhibition... Hm. I think my opinion of Dungeon Battles is about to change dramatically.

"I would certainly have liked to see one of the so-called greed traps from which your dungeon got its name, Rokuko."

"I wanna see that too, meow! It wasn't there during the dungeon battle, and if I go home without seeing it Haku would kill me dead! Pleaaase!"

"No way, it'd be embarrassing. This shortcut is going to take us right to the next floor anyway."

"I made the shortcut pass by one of the traps, since this is a guided tour."

"You're too good at this, Keima."

It was safe to say the greed traps were the most unique thing about our dungeon. Not introducing these would be like visiting Egypt and not checking out the pyramids or something. Of course I would plan around this.

"Ngh... W-Well, I guess you can take a look?"

Rokuko blushed. She resembled a young girl embarrassed to be seen in a bikini. *Okay, now this is getting cute.*

"Ahaha. I will take a good look at all your most splendid places, Rokuko."

"I need to give Haku a report on all your purretty spots!"

"Alright, let's go. It's right over here."

I pushed past a revolving hidden door and entered the shortcut that was out of sight for normal adventurers. Now I was really feeling

like a tour guide. Maybe I should have brought some flags, too.

“Right this way, everyone! If you look to your left, you can see the door to the greed traps!” I declared, taking them to one of the Magic Blade trial rooms. They were our dungeon’s most notable tourist attraction.

“So these are your greed traps, Rokuko... I see.”

“Pretty big room, meow. About medium-sized... Oh, there’s the Magic Blade pedestal.”

Misha promptly went up to the pedestal and slid out the Golem Blade we used as a trial Magic Blade. Instantly, thick needles slammed down at the entrance and sealed off the passageway. It was like an animal shutting its mouth.

“I see. So you could kill someone by tactically removing the sword, then.”

“Eugh, Aidy, you have some gross thoughts. But yes, people have used it for that before.”

“Mwahaha. When adventurers have arguments they love to trick each other into falling for deadly traps and just pretend they didn’t know what it did, meow. Happens aaalll the time,” Misha said, revealing deadly adventurer happenings while looking over the Magic Blade in her hand. “Let’s see here... It vibrates when you pour mana into it. Must make it a lot sharper, meow. I guess you like these, since you used them at the Dungeon Battle too? Are they just way cheaper than I think?”

Nice. I was a bit worried that an A-Rank adventurer like Misha would figure out they’re just Golems, but seems like she can’t. But the real test starts here.

“A vibrating Magic Blade... Haku’s cat, would you allow me to see that for a moment? I would like to see if it is a monster-type, or an item-type.”

There we go. After all, Aidy was a Magic Blade-type Core. Would a real-deal Magic Blade see through the Golem Blades I made...?

“A monster-type blade, I see. I sense its inanimate properties.”

“Awww, really? I thought for sure it was an item-type, meooow.”

It worked! Yes!

I struck a celebratory pose on the inside. Incidentally, when buying Magic Blades from the catalog it let you pick between item-type Magic Blades and so on. That was probably what she was talking about.

“Would that make you a monster-type Core yourself, Aidy?”

“Indeed, Rokuko. To be more detailed, monster-type blades are those with wills of their own and inanimate monster properties, whereas item-type blades are those that are normal blades with enchantments and magic circles carved into them. The Magic Blade

this town's smith is attempting to make is an item-type blade."

So my trusty blade Siesta is a monster-type blade, huh? Given that they talk and everything.

"Hmm, I see."

"Indeed. Golems are the same. The ones the town chief made in the Demon Realm are item-types, whereas those working in the dungeon and inn are monster-types."

Wait, did she actually notice they were Golem Blades? I'm kinda starting to sweat now.

"Oh! By the way," Rokuko said, "You can actually keep the Magic Blade if you manage to get it out. Right, Keima? That was in the rules?"

"Oh...?"

"HMMMM...?"

Misha and Aidy both stared at me.

"Well... The idea of this room is to let adventurers try out the Magic Blade and encourage them to dig deeper into the dangerous lower floors through greed, but there does need to be a policy in place for if someone manages to get one out. Want to try?"

"I see. I believe I shall try, then."

We returned to the Magic Blade to the pedestal to begin. Aidy pulled the Magic Blade out, and the needles blocked the exit. She put it back and then opened up. Out, close, in, open, out, close...

"This is certainly fun."

"Could mew hurry it up? I'm waiting for my turn."

"Oh my, excuse me."

At Misha's prompting, Aidy removed the Magic Blade. She then walked to the closed needles, pulled out her own red Magic Blade, readied it, and...

"{Crimson R—}"

"Stop, stop, stop, stop!"

I hurriedly interrupted Aidy. She stopped her skill midway for me.

"Yes, town chief?"

"What were you about to do?"

"I was merely about to use my attack skill, {Crimson Road}.

Destroying the needles will allow me to leave with the blade, no? It is that simple."

Please no. That's the skill that evaporated both metal and water back at the triple-threat Dungeon Battle. It was so deadly that the intense steam from the water actually pushed back the ocean. It just blasts out in one direction. The iron needles might be strengthened due to the dungeon's wall effects, but it would still melt them like nothing. The fire would pierce right through the labyrinth walls, too.

"I did intend to hold back, you know."

“Look, just take it. You win. Please don’t destroy the dungeon.”

“Oh, truly? Ahaha. I did it, Rokuko.”

“...Congratulations?”

Aidy happily put the Golem Blade into {Storage}.

“So it’s my turn now, meow? Keima, one new Magic Blade, please!”

“Normally I’d let it sit for a bit before putting on a new one, but sure, alright. Thank me by giving me a signature later. I’ll pay you back with a purin.”

“Nyahaha, okaaay!”

I used a dungeon function to put a new Magic Blade on the pedestal.

“Okay, time to show you why I’m called Misha the Tactician!”

“I’m gonna say I doubt anyone has ever called you that before in your life.”

Misha placed her hand on the Golem Blade’s hilt without removing it.

“Nyaha. I don’t even need to break the door for something this simple,” she said before pulling it out, and... disappearing. A blast of wind blew by me. The dot signifying Misha appeared on the map on the other side of the needles.

“Nyahahahaha! The trap’s nothing if you just run by the needles before the close. Eaaaaay!”

Yeah, she just overpowered it with her AGI stat. Not much in the way of tactics here.

“Not bad, Misha,” Aidy said.

“A bit hard for a Demon Realm princess, hmmmmmm?”

It was such an impressive feat that Aidy had subconsciously switched from calling her Haku’s cat to Misha. I replenished the Magic Blade and opened the door. There stood Misha with a smug grin and the Golem Blade in hand.

“Aaah, Rokuko’s Magic Blade! Now I’ve got a purrfect gift for Haku!”

Misha gleefully put the Golem Blade into {Storage}.

I think I’ll make the exit hallway bendy next time so running straight won’t work.

“Ah. I just realized this, but you don’t even need super speed for this. {Teleportation} will work on its own,” Rokuko muttered.

Yeah, not even a bendy hallway will stop that. Crap. We lose. Eeeh... Should I make it so the swords just break if they go outside the room? That’s pretty cheap, but...

“In truth, a human capable of removing the Magic Blade from this room would not need such a low level weapon. It is nothing for you to worry about, town chief.”

“Good point.”

At the very least, it's nothing I need to hurry and fix anytime soon.

And so, both of them easily defeated our greatest attraction, the greed trap. They had pretty much cleared the dungeon—the only notable thing left was the Inn of Greed, plus the wreckage of the puzzle area. That ended the tour. Adventurers didn't really venture much deeper, and there wasn't any need to explain the specifics of the rest. I didn't want them to see the unique Golems wandering the storage area at the bottom of the spiral staircase, after all.

Incidentally, several people were in the process of staying at the Inn of Greed. There were empty rooms, but... *Or wait, what's with these stands selling books and preserved food right by the inn?* Man, those are convenient. Are some people just outright living here? I don't mind, since that gets me DP, but wow.

“Down below is the storage area, and there's Magic Blades just like the one in the greed traps. But normal adventurers stop right before the spiral staircase over here, so that ends the tour.”

“I see. I would have liked to see a bit more, though... Is the excellent coliseum I saw when I infiltrated here during the last Dungeon Battle further down?”

She's talking about the triple-threat Dungeon Battle again, when I made a dungeon by the imperial capital.

“Yep, but I'm not taking you there.”

“I would love to duel that Vampire again...”

“Not happening.”

Rei would die from stress if that happened. She's a pretty delicate girl, really.

“Aaah. This is where those puzzles were, huh?” Misha asked, giving the broken pseudo-[Gates of Wisdom] a meaningful look.

“Guess you finished that construction, then! Whew, you should have seen the look on Haku's face...”

“Er, yeah. I can imagine. My sympathies?”

“Nyahaha! But it's thanks to that puzzle that everyone started calling me Misha the Tactician, meow!”

Rokuko nodded, remembering that, while Aidy just tilted her head in confusion.

“But the Inn of Greed, huh? I saw it in some Guild reports, but now that I'm seeing the real thing, it sure looks comfy. So tiny and perfect for a little cat nap. And you get items for it? Sounds like heaven! How's it work?”

“That's a secret. We'll only explain what adventurers know, after all.”

Though there wasn't actually much to explain since it was almost entirely manual labor being done in the background.

“Town chief, is there perhaps a system where escaping the Inn of Greed rewards one a Magic Blade?”

“No. Though the random item does give Magic Blades sometimes, if you’re lucky.”

Testing out the Inn of Greed would be a waste of time (for both of us, since neither Misha nor Aidy gave us any DP per day), so we ended the tour and left the dungeon. There were obviously no battles on the way out, and of course we left the dungeon safely.

* * *

One day passed. Today we were visiting the Beddhist church.

“So this is the infamous home base of Beddhism, hm?”

Aidy sure was looking smug for someone who didn’t even know the first B of Beddhism before coming here. “Infamous” my ass. At any rate, she was here to learn more about Goren as well.

“So, whaddaya think? A perfect place for afternoon naps, eh?”

“More importantly, where is this church’s coliseum? I would like to go there now.”

“What?”

“What?”

Aidy tilted her head. *Hey, I’m just as confused as you.*

“A church is no place for napping, I believe.”

“Why would a church have a coliseum?”

“What?”

“What?”

Aidy tilted her head in the opposite direction, but by that point I had figured it out.

“Aah, I get it. This is a cultural thing.”

“By which you mean, in the empire churches are for sleeping?”

“Yup. Only Beddhist churches though, I think.”

Or really, just how much did Aidy know about Beddhism anyway? I’d guess that at most she’s probably just heard a little bit about it from Rokuko.

“Do churches in the Demon Realm have coliseums attached to them or something? I don’t remember seeing any like that.”

“Ah, yes, I suppose you wouldn’t know because you were at Number 50’s estate the entire time. It is normal for churches and coliseums to be built together so that wounds can be healed as soon as possible.”

“Yeah, that’s practical.”

Truly an innovation one would only find in a country of battle junkies like the Demon Realm.

“Might it be that the plaza where I dueled those small fry is this town’s coliseum? I suppose the inn does provide an excellent view of

the battling.”

“I’ve never thought of it like that in my life.”

Incidentally, seven people in our main squad could use Restoration magic: me, Rokuko, Niku, Ichika, and the monster girl trio. I had just gone ahead and let them all learn it since Rokuko had rolled that many {Healing} scrolls in the gacha before.

Oh. Right, and the head nun slash Succubus leader Suilla can use Restoration magic too. And the other Succubi can use basic healing skills for scratches and minor injuries too, so...

“Now that I think about it, Beddhism really is a proper religion with proper churches.”

“Though in the Demon Realm, a church without a coliseum would be unthinkable.”

“I’m talking about from an imperial perspective here. As for coliseums... We have a game room at the inn to make up for that.”

Not that Aidy considers fighting to be a game, but yeah.

“A game room, you say?”

“Yep. There are these rat races you can gamble on, plus tables for dice and card games. Have you checked it out with Rokuko yet?”

“I haven’t gone there, no. If I wish to play dice or cards I can simply go to Rokuko’s room, after all... What are these rat races you speak of?”

“We have a bunch of rats, Gray Rats, line up next to each other and race across a track while people bet on who will reach the goal first.”

“I see, so it’s like a Slave Race but with rats.”

It turned out that the Demon Realm had their own version of the races, except they had human slaves run instead of rats.

“Putting that aside... Are those *books* strewn about haphazardly on the shelves?”

“Yep. They’re books.”

“I saw them covering the floor of Rokuko’s room as well. Books must be cheap in this town,” she said while picking up one and flipping through it. “Hmm. This is a bit confusing, but I imagine it is a bible?”

“Nah. We keep our bible locked up tight and only read from it at mass.”

“I see, that would explain why this book focuses entirely on agriculture,” she replied while picking up another book and flipping through it as well.

“Are you by chance a world-class speed reader?”

“Unfortunately, I am only recording the pages at the moment. I will give them a more thorough read-through later.”

Oh, right. Since she’s a Dungeon Core, she can record everything she

sees and replay the footage later. Which means... This is like her taking photos at a bookstore without paying? Hey!

"If you want to read these books, at least join Beddism first."

"Unfortunately, I am a member of the Ebony Church."

"The Ebony Church? That's the first time I'm hearing about that."

"I imagine it will be simpler if you envision it as the Demon Realm version of the Ivory Church. They are largely the same thing, though we worship the Demon God instead of the Ivory Goddess."

...Ah, I get it. It's a religion that worships the Great Demon King, Core 6. Okay, okay. Say no more. I understand everything.

"That said, Beddism is a sub-religion you can join without changing your main religion. We've got tons of people here who primarily worship the Food Church, the Ivory Church, the smithing god, the dice god, and so on."

"A sub-religion? That is not something I've heard of before. Will that not anger the gods?"

"Nope. After all, Beddism doesn't have a god."

"Now that you mention it, I do recall Rokuko mentioning that before. I largely ignored it since it didn't quite make sense to me, but... Is Rokuko not the goddess of Beddism?"

Now that's a strange idea. Why would Rokuko be the goddess of Beddism?

"I was certain you were gathering GP through Beddism, but perhaps I was mistaken."

"...GP?"

"Do not tell me you made Beddism without knowing about GP," Aidy said, her eyes widening with surprise.

Er, what? GP? Is there some system I don't know about here?

"GP are points you offer up to the gods—or rather, Father. According to Grandfather, he gives many rewards in return for the points."

"Oh hoh?"

"You can use them to ask for things that the DP catalog alone cannot accomplish. Gambling territory with Dungeon Battles was one such system implemented with GP, for example. I have heard that it is also why he is permitting Haku to hunt other Dungeon Cores."

Oh shit. Dad Points sure are something else. This must mean that GP stands for God Points. Yaaaah, I'm gonna want some of those too. I might want to save them up in case I really need him to bail me out of something. Do you get GP from gathering the faith of people or something?

As I pondered that, I heard a ding, and my menu opened on its own.

"....."

"Oh my, did something happen?"

“Er, yeah, I just got a message... Gimme a second.”

It was a message from Father: *Keima, I'll make Haku recognize your relationship with Rokuko for 100 GP.*

Uh, wait, he heard our conversation? He was eavesdropping? Lemme just write my reply here... “I don't think eavesdropping is very polite. I expect 100 GP in apology deposited to my menu right away.”

He responded within a second: *Ahaha, sorry, sorry. It was just a coincidence since you two are in a church. Anyway, as an apology I'll unlock the GP counter in your menu. You'll have to earn the GP on your own. No point if I just gave it to you myself!*

Welp. I checked my menu and saw a GP counter beneath the DP counter.

“Er, well, I can see my GP now.”

“Oh my, how lovely. I still can't see it myself... All we demon royalty work hard as apostles of the Ebony Church, but the counter doesn't show until you have accumulated enough.”

Apostles, huh? That sure sounds like something. Guess I must have earned this 34 GP by working as the Beddhist pope, then.

“Regardless, as an apostle of the Ebony Church it would certainly be unacceptable for me to join any other religion, so I will stop reading now. Even if that religion is one without a god such as Beddhism.”

“Misha joined Beddhism the other day. Do you think that'll cause problems?”

“What?! Haku's direct subordinate...? I suppose the Ivory Church may approach these things differently.”

Er, maybe...? Yeah, sure. Let's go with that. It'll be fine. She'll probably be punished a bit, but that's not the end of the world.

“Anyway, I kinda want to check all the stuff I just unlocked. Mind if that ends the tour for today?”

“Not at all. Do tell me if you learn anything interesting.”

“No promises. If you want to learn more about Beddhism, just ask any nun.”

“Certainly. Now, I will take a look around and then leave at my leisure.”

Thus, I left Aidy at the church and returned to my chief residence. Once in my room I started checking GP right away.

Or I thought I would, but once I actually opened up the menu I saw a button for turning 1 GP into 100,000 DP, and two fields I could manually input strings into. One was [Offer Up GP: (Enter Number)], and the other was [Your Request: (Enter Text)].

The interesting thing was that the two fields were completely separate. In other words, after offering up GP, you just had to hope Father would feel like granting your request. You had to work your

ass off to earn his favor, and only then ask for his help.

...I closed the menu, wondering if there wasn't a bit too much freedom of choice here.

Ultimately I decided to just let the GP sit where it was. I had been ignoring it up until now anyway, so it would probably be fine to keep ignoring it... *Might as well just ask Father to do his magic once I've saved up enough.* Yeah. I guess you earn more GP by getting more devoted followers, but... I don't have anyone to compare myself to, so I'm not even sure how much 34 DP is, nor how challenging it will be to get 100 GP.

Turning GP into DP was on an entirely different level from turning DP into gold coins. I could turn the gold right back into DP, but there didn't seem to be any way to turn DP into GP—the process was irreversible. It was probably a function one would only use if they desperately needed DP and had no other choice.

Well, no point thinking any more about it than I already have. Time to forget about it and sleep. Zzz.

Aidy's Perspective

Aidy was still at the Beddhist church. As she wandered around, she suddenly noticed something—someone. Someone she never should have been allowed to meet.

“Oh my! Oh my, my, my, my, my, my.”

“Hm...? Eeek?!”

Aidy walked over to the other person with a broad smile and grabbed their hand gently, but firmly. That person's name? Rei the High Priestess of Beddhistism.

“Eeerm, um, Aidy? What brings you here?” Rei said, troubled but needing to be polite since Aidy was her Master's visitor.

“You are... mm, I suppose I shouldn't say your race here? You're, ah, let's see, the town chief's... Goodness, picking words carefully is so tedious. Suffice to say, I have been searching for you. May I ask your name?”

“Rei...”

“Rei, I see. Rei! Consider it memorized. Because I have memorized it. Ahahaha.”

Rei had a very bad feeling about this, but Aidy paid that no mind, and even began stroking the back of her hand lovingly.

“Erm, um, have we met somewhere?”

“Oh my! Have you forgotten me? Even after we had such a passionate, heated date? My my, you certainly play hard to get...”

“D-Date?!”

Naturally, Rei had no memory of dating Aidy. But Aidy was from

the Demon Realm, and Aidy and Rei had engaged in a one-on-one duel to the death in the dungeon's coliseum at the end of the three way Dungeon Battle. In imperial terms, they were equivalent to lovers who had exchanged a passionate french kiss, and Aidy had exactly that much affection for Rei now (according to Keima's research).



In contrast to Aidy's joy, however, Rei was just befuddled. She hadn't seen Aidy at the feast since she had dragged Neruneh away from questioning, and since Rei had genuinely forgotten Aidy, she had no idea why she was being approached.

"Oh how I've yearned to date you again. You, Rei. Shall we begin?"

"S-Sorry, but I'm in the middle of work...?"

"I can wait. For your sake, I could even wait forever. Or would you like me to help so we can begin as soon as possible?"

Aidy wasn't letting up.

"Um, my work is something only I can do, so..."

"Waiting it is, then. How long will it take? We can meet at the plaza, and... No, that won't do. How about the fateful coliseum where we first met, deep in the dungeon?" Aidy asked, a lovestruck look on her face, and finally Rei understood. Aidy had participated in the triple threat Dungeon Battle, and she was the one who invaded the coliseum at the end.

Honestly, she deserved some high praise for figuring that one out. After all, Aidy had been in her Magic Blade form during the Dungeon Battle, and the Living Armor had been wielding her. Rei had never even seen her face.

In any case, Rei thought things through based on what she knew, which meant she thought about it from an imperial perspective. And from that perspective, it made no sense why Aidy would be fawning over her so much. They had been enemies. Or, well, Rokuko and Aidy were close friends despite having fought each other, but that was different since they were both Dungeon Cores. The Dungeon Battle had probably been a fight between friends observed by their respective guardians.

A possible analogy would be Rei protecting her Master (Rokuko) from being bitten by her friend's dog. Why would Aidy adore her so much for that? She wasn't even this close to Rokuko, and yet here she was, pressing her body up against Rei and stroking her hand lovingly.

If Rei had read the report Keima had given to the empire, she would have figured things out, but unfortunately she hadn't. Let me repeat: engaging a Demon Realm resident in a duel to the death was equivalent to two imperial lovers exchanging a heated french kiss! (According to Keima's research.)

Rei paled, being unable to process this as anything but a psychopath targeting her.

"Please, just say yes...? I want to do it with you again..." Aidy begged cutely, her cheeks flushed red, but all Rei heard was, "I'm going to kill you this time." (Incidentally, that wasn't too far off the

mark for a Demon Realm date.) (According to Keima's research.)

"Um, Master told me not to fight you under any circumstances, so...!"

Rei threw out an excuse as best she could. It wasn't technically a lie, either, if one interpreted him telling her to treat Aidy as a visitor very broadly.

Hearing that, Aidy pursed her lips with frustration. "I see... He must wish to hide the extent of your strength from me. Very well then, I will give up on this."

"Ahaha. Thank you very much."

"A shame. Truly a shame."

Rei gave a polite smile as Aidy fell back despite her extreme dissatisfaction.

"Putting that aside for now, Rei. My interest in you is undying, and so I would like to observe your work. You are a nun, I believe?"

"Erm... Well, yes, technically?"

To be more precise she was a High Priestess, but in Beddism even the High Priestess was considered a nun. There was no hard delineation between them. Not to mention that Rei was indeed wearing a standard nun outfit.

"The town chief said to ask any nun about Beddism. In other words, I have the right to question you about Beddism, and you have a responsibility to answer me. Am I mistaken?"

"N-Not at all."

And so, Aidy locked her targets onto Rei, and from then on Aidy constantly visited the Beddhist church to spend as much time as physically possible with Rei—after all, they had exchanged a one-on-one duel to the death, that even ended in Aidy's defeat. To describe Aidy's position in imperial terms, she was like an innocent young girl who had the handsome man of her dreams push her onto bed and whisper sweet love into her heart. (According to Keima's research.)

* * *

"Keima, Keima! Look at this, look!"

One day, a week or so after Aidy had first visited us, Rokuko energetically burst into my room.

"What's up? I sure hope this was worth my sleep getting interrupted."

"It sure is! I talked to Aidy about some stuff. Check out what was added to the menu!"

Rokuko eagerly showed me her menu. I thought she was talking about DP, but what she actually showed me was a new [Strengthen] option.

"[Strengthen]! It's [Strengthen]!"

“Oh yeah, Aidy did mention something like this before...”

As I recalled, after the Dungeon Battle with her she had mentioned that Magic Blade-type cores had a [Strengthen] option for using DP to strengthen themselves. Our menu didn't have it, but I guess that was just because we hadn't unlocked it yet.

Who knows what unlocked it for us here... The heck was she talking to Aidy about?

“It turns out... this [Strengthen] function will let me power up!”

“Makes sense.”

“For example, [Beastification]! Using these options will give me animalistic powers,” Rokuko said, selecting the [Strengthen] function, then going to [Beastification]. There were more precise categories there too, including [Dog], [Cat], [Monkey], and even [Lion]. The page was entirely mammals. The price changed depending on the animal, but even the [Rabbit] one was 150,000 DP. The [Lion] one was 500,000 DP. Aaand... the [Whale] one was 3,000,000 DP.

“There's [Dragonification] too! Ahaha, I think it'd be pretty on point for me to transform into a Dragon and fight.”

She opened that page next, revealing [Wyvern] at 800,000 DP, [Green Dragon] at 30,000,000 DP, and... [Red Dragon] at a surprisingly cheap 10,000,000 DP. Maybe that was because we had a Red Dragon neighbor? Hmm. [Crocodile], [Iguana], [Snake], and [Lizardman] were all in this area too... Either the catalog was kinda messed up, or they were just put together for convenience. There was probably a [Reptilification] page somewhere too.

“[Weaponification] and [Itemification] are nice too. We could, like, fight together, with you wielding me.”

Those had [Sword], [Shield], [Armor], [Helmet], and... [Underwear].

Equipment, huh? Should this really be an option?

Incidentally, all of them were 300,000 DP flat. According to what Rokuko had heard from Aidy, each of those options equated to transforming into a low-quality version of the item. We would probably be getting [Magic Blade-ification] later, though Aidy probably didn't need anything like that since she was already a Magic Blade-type core.

...Or maybe Aidy could transform into, like, a Magic Blade of another element? Maybe she could transform from a sword into a spear, or into armor, or something like that. Might be cool.

“And here's [Humanification], too. I didn't think I would need it, but these options are actually pretty interesting.”

[Human], [Beastkin], [Elf], [Dwarf]... Each 100,000 DP.

I wonder if these will dramatically change her appearance? Could be wise to buy one for camouflage purposes. Also... I feel like Core 219

mentioned something about human transformations, but I'm just going to not try to remember it.

"Beastkin Rokuko... I wonder if cat ears or dog ears would look better on you."

"Oh, oh? Are you curious? We can buy it if so."

"Nah, it'd be cheaper to get headbands with the ears on them."

We investigated the catalog further and discovered a [Monsterification] category as well, and at the top were all the basic monsters we could summon in our dungeon as well.

Oh, the Dragons are here too. Yeah, this catalog is definitely just mixing related stuff together for convenience. That's pretty ideal for a digital catalog, all things considered.

"But anyway, it'd be cheaper to just buy these with DP, so I don't really see the need for you to transform into any of them."

"True. Sad, but true."

...Though there are some applications, like her transforming into a Slime that's strong against physical attacks. She could also use its liquid form to slip past bars and such to run away from things. Emergency Slime.

"But, but, but! This is really exciting, isn't it? It's just like your {Ultra Transformation}!"

"Yeah, though these cost DP."

"Speaking of which, you can transform into food, right? Like lollipops and stuff?"

Food wasn't in the [Strengthen] catalog, but I could use my {Ultra Transformation} to transform into it. And...that was when I noticed Rokuko giving me a hungry look.

"Don't eat me, alright? It'd still be me."

"What's the problem? You'll revive. Don't worry, I won't bite down."

"I'm pretty sure it would be terrible for me. Like, being literally licked to death while melting? No thanks."

"True, true. And I'd be in danger if you revived inside of me."

That genuinely was dangerous. No joke.

"Eheheh, what, did you want to be licked to death by me?"

I glanced at Rokuko's mouth. Or rather, Rokuko was showing me her mouth. She had opened wide and was wiggling her tongue around as if rolling a lollipop on top of it. I grinned while looking at her wiggling tongue.

"Want me to lick you, then?"



“Rokuko. Let me give you a little tip: wiggling your tongue like that is lewder than a kiss.”

“Eep?!”

Rokuko blushed.

“L-Lewd?! This isn’t lewd! It’s not lewd at all!”

“Sure, sure. Whatever you say.”

She started hitting me with a nearby pillow. It actually hurt.

“...Keima, hug.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Haku had given her permission for us to hug, so we could do that as much as we wanted, technically. I went ahead and gave Rokuko a tight hug. She let out a dreamy sigh of satisfaction, then pulled back.

“Anyway, in conclusion, I can [Strengthen] myself now.”

“Yup. Though I didn’t actually see any normal power boosting options that weren’t transformations. You know, stuff like Aidy’s Indestructible trait.”

Though I can guess that was probably something only for non-living creatures.

“Those are probably all still locked. I’m not really sure what the requirements for them might be. Mm... Do you think I’ll be able to fight too once they pop up?”

“Nah, you should never fight, Rokuko. Cores need to be kept safe at all costs. The Demon Realm Cores are crazy for fighting out on the front lines like that.”

...Is it just me, or has Aidy started influencing Rokuko a bit lately? I’d rather her not be around bad influences like that, but oh well.

“Master! Rokuko! If I may, I would like to request that the dungeon be modified!” Rei announced, walking into my room as Rokuko and I laid around doing nothing.

“Whoa, where’s all this coming from?”

“Is this surprising? The dungeon hasn’t been modified at all lately, and although I’ve been trusted with managing the dungeon, I cannot make any changes without your or Rokuko’s permission.”

That made sense. I was letting Rei and her new subordinate, Elka, handle most of the dungeon administration. If she wanted to modify the dungeon, then she probably had a good reason for it.

“I request a direct path be made to the coliseum area! As it stands, I have no idea where Aidy might drag me off and try to kill me!”

Ah. Right.

“Uh-huh.” Rokuko nodded. “Aidy really did take a liking to you, Rei.”

“T-Take a liking to me, you say?”

“She super likes you. She even keeps asking me if I’ll let her have

you. I turned her down, obviously. You're my precious dungeon administrator."

"R-Rokuko! Thank you, thank you so much!"

Aidy went that far...? I guess it probably just came up in casual conversation, but still.

"But wait, she *likes* me? I thought she just wanted to kill me."

"Aaah... Alright, look. Remember how you fought Aidy at the dungeon battle? That's all it took," I said.

"Uh-huh. In Demon Realm culture, fighting like that is something best friends do."

Indeed. And I could guess that from Aidy's perspective, Rei had been winning the life-or-death duel, such that she would have won had I not interfered midway through. The fact she called Rei by her actual name just like she used Rokuko's name when she still refused to use my name even when it would be convenient to do so just showed how much she really liked her.

"S-So in other words, I accidentally defeated an opponent so strong that not even Niku can hope to beat her... B-But that's all a misunderstanding, isn't it? Besides, it wasn't a one-on-one duel. Kinue and Neruneh were there, plus your Gargoyles."

"What matters here is how Aidy saw things, I think."

"Right. Aidy's a super straight shot once she's convinced of something," Rokuko agreed with a nod. Also, summoned monsters were seen as nothing more than obstacles in a duel.

"At the very least, I guess this means she won't kill me, then?"

"Nah, she will. She's from the Demon Realm, after all."

"Uh-huh. She's from the Demon Realm."

"Eep?! I knew it, she doesn't like me!"

Rei's eyes welled with tears. Honestly, I knew how she felt.

"Duels to the death are a sign of love in the Demon Realm. There's some duels to the death that aren't romantic, but the more they love someone, the more they want to kill them."

"What the heck?! How are they so messed up?!"

I feel the same way, but that's just their culture. Different people believe different things.

"Well, anyway, since in your case she wants to kill you out of love, she'll probably be fussy over the details. I can guess she'll want it to happen in a duel at the coliseum."

"Eep...! This is crazy... Not only am I not strong, I'm the weakest dungeon administrator in the group, and my attack power is zero... Oh, would Aidy fall out of love with me if I told her that?"

"Don't look down on yourself—your true worth lies outside of battle. But, uh, your lack of attack power is kind of a dungeon secret, so it's for the best you don't correct her on that."

“A-As you wish, Master...” Rei said, hanging her head sadly.

“Also, telling her that probably wouldn’t help anyway. She wouldn’t believe it until seeing it for herself, which would involve a duel to the death.”

“It feels like it’s already too late for everything.”

“Don’t worry!” Rokuko said. “She knows I’m weak now, but she still challenges me to duels sometimes.”

Rokuko, that’s not going to help. That just makes it worse.

“A-At the very least... Please fill the way to the coliseum with traps to slow her down, and then come rescue me if she starts dragging me there...”

“R-Right.”

Rei’s desperate plea was so emotional I decided to be kind and help her out, like a good Dungeon Master should.

“So yeah, I added a riddle room.”

I took Rokuko and Rei into the dungeon to show them the time wasters I added.

“If you give a wrong answer, it closes down and takes twenty-four hours before it lets you try again. It basically stops you from giving any more answers.”

I reused the timers I’d designed for the inn of greed to institute a cooldown, where a wrong answer would cause the puzzle to flip around and hide in the wall.

“Perfect for buying time, huh?”

“Thank you so much, Master!”

Rei gave a deep bow. Her being so happy made all the work worth it.

“But that won’t do much if she answers correctly right away,” Rokuko observed. “What’s the riddle?”

“Right. Check it out.”

At Rokuko’s prompting, I read the riddle aloud.

“There is a ferocious trap within a dungeon. You will die no matter what if you get caught in the trap. You have to get past it to reach a treasure chest. But a certain adventurer managed to get past the trap and obtain the treasure despite the trap activating. So, how did the adventurer get past the trap and obtain the treasure?”

Rokuko and Rei tilted their heads.

“Hm...? You die for sure if you get caught in the trap, right?”

“Yup. You do.”

“I know, Master! Did he exchange his life to get the treasure?” Rei asked, shooting her hand up excitedly.

“Bzrt. Enjoy waiting for a day.”

Rei’s hand drifted sadly back down to her side.

“That said, you’re not actually wrong, Rei.”

“Wha?”

Normally you’d think a riddle has only one answer, but in this case I’d used ambiguous wording to make two answers possible. The first answer would always be considered wrong, forcing the challenger to wait a full day before giving the second answer. It was essentially cheating, but thanks to making these traps with Golems it was totally fair to do so.

“Not bad, Keima. But why not just make a door that forces you to wait a day outright?”

“I mean... If I did that, I wouldn’t be able to make a trip to the boss room and back in a single day when acting like an adventurer.”

“Uh-huh...”

“I would expect nothing less, Master! No detail escapes your grasp!”

I’d made up that excuse on the spot, earning an eye-roll from Rokuko who saw through it, and genuine praise from Rei who hadn’t. I averted my gaze from them both.

“So, what’s the other answer?”

“Guess. Just this once, I’ll turn off the cooldown and give some reward to whoever figures it out.”

Rokuko’s eyes gleamed.

“Since Rei’s answer was wrong... We can tell the other answer doesn’t involve him dying.”

“More or less.”

Your only hint with the puzzle was that the door not opening meant you had answered wrong, since it would open if you got it right. There were some lateral thinking logic puzzles on Earth that involved this kind of thing.

“Oh! What about this: the adventurer used {Create Golem} to fall for the trap, then went for the chest afterwards.”

The door rumbled open. *Seriously? One try?*

“Amazing, Rokuko!” Rei exclaimed. “Now that I think about it, the riddle never did say he was the one who got caught in the trap!”

“Yep. Her answer’s so good I honestly want to ask if she’s cheating.”

“Eheheh, too bad for you. All I did was think about what kind of trick you would pull here, Keima. I simply know you too well.”

Hrm, so she read my mind that easily, huh? Rokuko’s getting good.

I opened up my menu to reward her with melon rolls, and...

“Hold on, Keima. I have something I want other than melon rolls.”

“Hm? What’s that? I’ll see what I can do.”

I stopped fiddling with the menu.

“Let me see Succuma.”

“.....”

“Let me see Succuma,” Rokuko repeated with a smile. “Actually, how about I get to use Succuma as my dakimakura for the whole night?”

Hell no, that'd be torture. You want to kill me? Or alternatively, do you want Haku to kill me?

“Sorry, Rokuko, but there are some things I just can't do.”

“It doesn't cost a single DP, and I'm pretty sure it's well within your power to make this happen.”

You're not wrong, it's just, come on!

“Besides, I can buy as many melon rolls as I want on my own terms. It's not much of a reward then, is it? Just let me enjoy my fill of Succuma.”

“Hey, don't escalate things.”

“I'm going to keep escalating until you agree.”

“Fine... Later, then. Later,” I said. Rei was staring at me silently, clearly trying to convey she wanted to see Succuma too, but nope. Rokuko got the answer right, not her.

“Tonight. I'll be waiting in my room... Ahaha, don't worry. It'll just be us. No one will see you but me. There's nothing to be embarrassed about,” Rokuko said with a grin, and there was nothing more I could say. I raised my hands in a sign of defeat.

Time flew by painfully fast. I put on the Succubus ring Kosaki and went over to Rokuko's room. Nothing I could do but pump myself up and endure it.

When I entered Rokuko's room, she greeted me with heavy breathing and sweat on her brow.

“There you are, Keima! I've been waiting! Now, hurry up and turn into Succuma!”

“Hold it, hold it. I'm ready, but let me just ask one thing first, Rokuko. Are *you* ready?”

“What do you mean? Do I need something for this?” Rokuko asked, tilting her head.

“The Lionheart Bracelet we got from Mikan's dungeon battle. You should put it on.”

“Why?”

“The {Charm} effect my Succubus form has is deadly. You need anti-charm equipment.”

“But I want to be charmed by you, Keima. That's the point,” she said, pulling back the blanket on her futon like she couldn't wait any longer. *Right. I have to be her dakimakura too...*

“Did you forget how you lost your mind when Niku turned into a Succubus? You ended up seeing her as me, which means—in other

words—you won't be able to see me for myself once I turn into a Succubus. Is that what you want?"

"No. Okay, I'll wear the bracelet."

I sighed in relief. A legendary item forged by Father would surely block my Succubus charms without issue. If not for it, Rokuko would have attacked me in bed and gone so far that the "hug" excuse wouldn't work anymore.

After confirming that Rokuko really did have the silver bracelet on her arm, I steeled my resolve and let the Kosaki possess me.

"Kosaki, you have my permission. Possess me."

"Roger! Come forth, Succumaaaa!"

Kosaki was so hype she flashed lights and voiced the sound effects herself. She hadn't done this kind of full-on magical girl transformation since the time we pulled this on Ittetsu. *Maybe death would be better after all.*

"Charming Girl Succuma! I'm here to steal your heart, teehee!"

My body moved on its own, striking the pose that silenced even Ittetsu. I winked at Rokuko while pointing my finger in a gun and playfully shooting a kiss.

"Ngh!"

Even with the god-tier anti-charm equipment, Rokuko was at a loss for words. She opened her eyes wide as if to burn my visage into her retinas.

"C-C'mon, say something. This is just making it worse for me."

"Um, right! You're super, super cute... And you smell nice..."

Her reaction made me seriously doubt whether the anti-charm equipment was working. Well, if it hadn't been she would probably already be clinging to me and sucking my ear, so it probably was working.

"Wow. You really do look just like a girl now, don't you?"

"Don't take off the bracelet, alright? Keep it on. Always."

"I know, I know. Can I touch you? Can I lick you? I need to know what you taste like," Rokuko said, breathing hard through her nose with dilated pupils.

Uh, is this bracelet really working?

"You gotta be kidding me. I'm canceling the transformation."

"Wait! Please, wait! It was just a joke! All a joke! Hahahaha!!!"

Eugh. I'm used to being Succuma by now, as much as it pains me, but I don't think I'll ever get used to being stared at like this. It's just embarrassing for Rokuko to breathe so heavily, touch my skin, smell my neck, slide her arms underneath my clothes, and go for my... Hey, what the heck?! Rokuko, what are you doing?!

"The bracelet's not working, is it?! Tell the truth!"

"Oh but it is, Keima. The bracelet's working just fine, no doubt

about it. But my love demands I enjoy every part of you right now! I'll accept no complaints! You said you would let me do this, Keima, so take responsibility and let me have my fill."

"Pretty sure you said you would just look..."

"At that point my demands had already escalated, and you agreed to it, Keima! Gosh, how do you smell so good? Where is this scent coming from? Your neck? Your chest? Your armpits...?"

Rokuko sniffed like a puppy. She looked just like Niku.

"I want to touch this smooth skin of yours forever... It's all flushed and sticking to my hand, like, wow. Oh, and is this back-exposing sweater the only outfit you have?"

"I can change it! Do you have any requests?" Kosaki asked.

"Hey! Kosaki, did I say you could do that?!"

"I remember Ichigo saying he wore an idol outfit for her. Start with that."

"Roger dodger!"

"GAAAAH! What do you mean, 'start with that'?! You're planning to make me wear tons of stuff, aren't you?!"

There was nothing I could do as my clothes flashed and turned into the idol outfit I wore at the rabbit dungeon.

"Perfect!"

"What's perfect?!"

"Let's see what's going on under your skirt. One second."

"Quit it!"

I chopped Rokuko's head as she tried climbing underneath my skirt.

"I saw your underwear for a second, and it was black! I knew it, you love black underwear, don't you?!"

"You're messed up. Kosaki, change my clothes back."

"Now, now, Master! Let's be nice and satisfy Rokuko's lust here, eh? It'll be for your benefit too!"

Hm? I decided to hear Kosaki out.

"Anti-charm equipment ultimately just blocks the {Charm} effect itself."

"Right."

"It stops {Charms} from raising the wearer's affection or controlling them. But it doesn't make their hearts remain steady in general. Or really, judging by the item's name, we can conclude it just strengthens the heart they already have."

"Uh... Right?"

"Also, it doesn't stop her from loving your smell or feeling good from touching you. And Rokuko has been touching you all over for some time now. Do you understand what I'm getting at?"

In other words, she touched me as Succuma based on her own

desires, which in turn made her want to touch me more. The Lionheart Bracelet strengthened those desires, and since she was overflowing with love for Succuma from the start, there was no need to {Charm} her in the first place...

"Wait, doesn't that mean this is actually worse than {Charming} her?!"

"That's why you need to satisfy her now, or risk being tied to bed later once you cancel the transformation, okay? I mean, I won't stop you if that's what you want, but..."

Guh... This is why I don't like transforming into Succuma.

"Alright, I'll cooperate. You can change my outfit...one more time. That's it."

"Hmm! This is tough... Mm, mmmm..."

Rokuko thought for a moment, then decided.

"Okay, I'll be bold here and go with your normal jersey!"

"Roger!"

My clothes flashed with light and turned into the jersey I always wore. It was a bit too big, but eh. At least it was better than Succuma's default outfit.

Though on second thought, there aren't many outfits worse than that sweater to begin with.

"So floofy! You're so cute and floofy!"

"You're a major cutie, Master!"

"U-Uh... Is it really that cute? This is just my usual jersey," I replied. From my perspective, Rokuko was way cuter given how she was jumping for joy.

"Eheh, do you want to see yourself wearing it? You look super omega cute. Not seeing it would basically be the biggest mistake you ever made, I think."

"Seriously...? Alright, now I'm curious."

"Want a mirror? Here."

"Cool. Than—"

I took the mirror from Rokuko and made eye contact with myself (i.e. Kosaki). There I saw a slender form, a cute nose, and naturally flushed cheeks. Shiny lips, long eyelashes, and last but not least, big red Succubus eyes that made me feel all sleepy...

It was morning.

Weird, I can't remember anything. Why? I didn't drink beer or anything.

At some point my Succubus transformation had ended, and now I was wrapped in the Divine Comforter and Divine Quilt with Rokuko clinging to me like a pillow.

Huh. What happened? I remember up until the point I made eye

contact with the girl... Er, rather, the boy in the mirror, Succuma.

I tried asking Kosaki, but she just said nothing happened and if I didn't remember anything, it was surely because nothing happened. Rokuko nodded in agreement.

"No, seriously. What happened? Be honest."

"....."

"Rokuko."

"I-It's a secret!"

That wasn't exactly an answer, but Rokuko was blushing enough I got the feeling it was best not to press further. I decided to just do my best to forget any of this ever happened.

Also, Rei said, "Sounds like you two had fun last night, hm?", so I flicked her forehead.

* * *

Anyway, more days passed with Aidy staying in Goren. She seemed to be having a good time here; she was sparring daily with Niku and the others in the plaza behind the inn.

"Ahaha. Not bad at all, pup. Continue entertaining me."

"Ngh... You're good... Take this!"

"Almost, but not quite."

I went to the plaza and found Niku and Aidy already engaged in a mock duel. Ichika was sitting on the ground nearby, covered in sweat from what I could guess was her own mock duel earlier. I sat next to her.

"Good work, Ichika."

"Heya, Master. Gimme a sec before you sit so close. I stink like a pig with all this sweat... {P-Purification}. Okay. So, wazzup?"

"Hey, I don't mind it. But anyway, I came here to check up my esteemed visitor, but... this is something else, huh?"

I tried watching Niku and Aidy fight, but they had already reached a level where it was kind of impossible for the human eye to keep up with. *I mean, at this rate Niku's gonna be giving up her humanity or whatever. This definitely isn't just her Wearable Golem helping out—actually it seems kind of like she's surpassed the Wearable Golem entirely... Well, Aidy's the real crazy one here, since she's easily keeping up with Niku. Surely she's strong enough to duel a Hero now. Especially after all that practice with Wataru.*

"Y'know, Master."

"Hm? 'Sup, Ichika?"

"Niku got, like, hella stronger after coming back from the Demon Realm. I'm kinda not even in her league anymore. Who's gonna be her training partner now?"

"I mean, I don't know about all beastkin, but I think there's

definitely something weird about this.”

“A kid her age being this strong is definitely whack, dude...”

Would it not be whack if she were older, then? Beastkin are something else.

“Oops, my bad. It’d be whack no matter how old she is. It’s just nutty in general.”

“Really? Damn.”

“Isam’s an average beastkin, so, y’know. He’d get his ass beat by Niku, am I right?”

Oh yeah, that wolf beastkin who was Ichika’s former party member. Makes sense.

Niku was getting so strong that it didn’t seem like it would be long before she said something like “I am off to search for someone stronger than me” and disappear for decades. Just what was making Niku get so strong so fast? One option I had was to get Cid or Maiodore to search for a sparring partner for her. Nobles like them probably had connections that would make it a snap.

“By the way, Master. Lemme tell you something nice.”

“Yeah? What’s up?”

Ichika gestured me over, so I leaned closer to her.

“Turns out she’s not even using Golem Assistance at all.”

“What?”

Seriously? She’s zipping around like that with her own power? She’s moving so fast I can almost see afterimages, and sometimes it feels like she just teleports away.

“The assistance helps boost her power for attacks, but when it comes to speed she says she’s faster on her own.”

“Well. Niku sure is something else, huh?”

“Yup. And I don’t know what, my dude.”

I wonder how much stronger she’ll get. At this rate she might actually be able to beat a Hero. If we exclude Hero skills, she could easily beat someone on Suzuki’s level.

The phrase *a beast of potential* described Niku perfectly, and honestly, I had to question how someone incredible like her had ended up as my slave.

Well...only one answer comes to mind. Rokuko’s insane luck drew her over. Yeah, okay. Mystery solved.

“Now, now, is that all you have? Try to survive this.”

“Ngh, hrmp!”

Aidy launched a flurry of sharp jabs at Niku. Niku dodged them by the skin of her teeth and swung her wooden knife in a counterattack, which Aidy blocked with her wooden sword. I couldn’t even see Aidy move. I thought I had gotten a bit stronger at Core 50’s place, but apparently I was wrong.

“You have certainly learned to hold your breath for a long time, pup.”

“Thanks to you...!”

“If only you graduate from humanity, you can become even stronger.”

Graduate from humanity and become what? A vampire? Spooky.

I watched for a bit until eventually the duel came to a close. Aidy looked this way and smiled at me.

“Welcome. Have you come to duel me as well, town chief?

Excellent. I was hoping to exercise a bit more before my date with Redra.”

“Nah, I just came to check up on my guest.”

“A shame.”

Niku was wiping away her sweat with a towel, but there wasn't a drop of sweat on Aidy. Either human transformations didn't have sweat, or the fight was so trivial to her that she didn't even need to break a sweat.

“Incidentally, I see you do not ever remove this pup's collar, town chief,” Aidy said out of nowhere.

“Hm? Slave collars aren't really something you're supposed to take off.”

“You think so? In the Demon Realm, we remove them when they are unnecessary. Take Sebas, my Master, for example. Wouldn't it be shameful for me to be incapable of controlling him without a collar?”

“Is that how you see it?”

Thinking back, I did remember times where Sebas hadn't been wearing a collar.

“Indeed. Will her neck not burn from the collar?”

I took a look at Niku. She couldn't wipe the inside of the collar with the towel, so she just used {Purification} from the neck.

“I feel like I remember being told she'd die if we removed the collar carelessly.”

“That is possible; the collar tightens if you try removing it. But it would simply be illogical for slaves to die if their collar is broken and removed. All that would do is create another weak point.”

Now that she mentioned it, my collar had been taken off all the time in the Demon Realm. Which meant...

“Niku has some kind of special slave contract...?”

“Pretty sure she's just been ordered to not take it off, my dude. Slaves are under magic contracts to obey all orders, remember?”

“Oh, right.”

“I see.”

Both Aidy and I nodded in agreement at Ichika's pretty obvious conclusion.

“We’re stuck with these collars till you say we can take them off, Master. I dunno about the Demon Realm, but that’s how it works over here in the empire.”

“I see. Well, if you pups are fine with that, I suppose it’s fine,” Aidy said while taking a chocolate cornet from {Storage} and biting into it. She then cast {Water} so quietly nobody would usually hear it.

“Speaking of which,” she continued, “It seems that incantation-less magic has not caught on here, and all the pathetically weak adventurers in this town are shocked whenever I use it. Just how far behind is the empire when it comes to warfare?”

“Now that you mention it, people over there were using Low-Rank spells so casually it was like they were Survival spells. There were a lot of magic scrolls in the market too.”

They actually did call several Low-Rank spells Survival magic there, literally.

“Oh my. Magic is necessary for humans to fight on equal terms with monsters, is it not? The Demon Realm is swarming with them.”

There were many monster citizens in the Demon Realm, even, and they could activate skills equivalent to magic without any incantations. The humans there had developed advanced warfare just to keep up with them. Not to mention that more humans using magic meant more trial and error learning. The empire on the other hand only had to deal with feral monsters and fight in groups against them, which meant we had just kept using incantations. I suggested that theory to Aidy.

“Fascinating. That would explain it.”

“It’s all just a theory, though. Just another cultural difference.”

“Culture, hm... I thought this would be nothing more than a leisurely trip, but I truly am learning much here. I never expected I would learn something about the Demon Realm itself while spending time here,” Aidy murmured. She looked like a little battle junkie on the inside, but she was actually pretty serious... or rather, pretty scholarly. She did know alchemy, after all.

“Speaking of which, you are from another world, as I recall. While I’m here, I would like to learn about your original world’s culture as well.”

“Hm? Uhhh... Well, I’ll prepare a book of polite etiquette for you or something. Have Rokuko read it to you.”

“Why, thank you.”

Translating the Japanese myself would be a huge pain. Best to just leave it to Rokuko.

By the way, I learned this later, but apparently she lost to Redra in their duel. Truly, Redra was fearsome. Aidy did have a more balanced duel against Igni, though. Apparently it was a lot of fun since they

were both creatures of Fire.

Might be a good idea to borrow Igni for Niku's sparring. I'll pay them with golem beets.

Side Chapter — Aidy's Pastry Reading

“Cornets are truly divine.”

“Melon rolls are good too.”

It was a day like any other, with Aidy and Rokuko chowing down in the inn's dining hall. As of late it wasn't uncommon at all to see the two of them eating pastries together. Rokuko owned the inn, and Aidy was well-known as a guest from the Demon Realm. On top of that, Rokuko was Keima's partner, and Aidy was strong enough to easily beat Niku, the town's strongest fighter. Both of them drew a lot of attention.

“Lately, I have concluded that one's favorite pastry is a reflection of their personality,” Aidy said while biting into her chocolate cornet.

“Oh...? Continue,” Rokuko replied casually.

“For example, my cornets. They reflect a very aggressive personality. They're pointed to stab through any resistance.”

“And my melon rolls?”

“They are shaped like shields. Surely they reflect a defensive personality.”

“My goodness. I think you're onto something,” Rokuko replied, probably just wanting to dramatically say “I think you're onto something” whether or not she actually believed it. Incidentally, the sword on Rokuko's hip was ornamental, and they both already understood that Rokuko would rip like wet paper if Aidy chose to attack her. Aidy didn't scorn her for that, however, as she understood Rokuko's true power was in Dungeon Battles.

In truth, Aidy had concluded that Rokuko had talent as a general who gave orders from the sidelines, which was not a concept that existed in the Demon Realm proper. She thus assumed that Rokuko would assign troops to guard her in a defensive formation. Was she wrong about that? Not really, but you couldn't deny she was kind of forcing things to fit into how she viewed reality.

“It's like palm reading... Pastry reading, I guess? I kinda wanna see what other people think.”

“Truly? Let me see, then...” Aidy looked around the dining hall and saw Niku working as a waitress. Some hand-gesturing later and she walked this way. “Answer, pup. What is your preference?”

“Mm?” Niku tilted her head in confusion at the sudden question.

“Oh, she’s talking about pastries. Aidy, you have to explain what you’re talking about.”

“Hrm... That is tedious. Allow me to ask again, then. Pup. What is your pastry of choice?”

Aidy corrected herself with Rokuko’s advice, and after thinking about why Aidy would ask that, Niku gave her answer.

“Hamburgers.”

“I see. I suppose pastries can include anything with bread, if you stretch it a bit.”

“O wise and mighty Aidy, what personality does that reflect?”

“Give me a moment, Rokuko. I am thinking it through.”

After a brief pause, Aidy came to her conclusion. Hamburgers were certainly like pastries filled with meat. Which meant...

“She is a carnivore! As one would expect of a dog, really.”

“I see!”

“Consider me surprised. I thought she was just a pup, but in reality she was a feral beast.”

“Not bad, Niku!”

“Mm? Okay...?”

Aidy let out an amused laugh and praised her. Not knowing why she was being praised, Niku just nodded in confusion.

“Let us move on, Rokuko.”

“Okaaay.”

Rokuko and Aidy left the dining hall in search of their next victim... or rather, their next target. They first visited the Beddhist church. Why? No reason. They knew the Succubus nuns and Rei the High Priestess were there, at least, and... There. They found the High Priestess and wasted no time questioning her.

“Eep! You’re here again, Aidy...? Oh, you want to know my favorite pastry? Well, I don’t really have one... My favorite food is blood.”

Already they had found an outlier—someone who didn’t have a favorite kind of pastry at all. Tch. Talk about a buzzkill. That said, it seemed obvious the Succubus nuns would give an even worse answer... They messed up going to the church at all.

“I guess that makes sense for a Vampire. So, Aidy? Will favorite foods in general work here?”

“No. Pastries are the heart of all this, Rokuko. And thus, Rei, I demand you give a proper answer.”

“Whaaaaat? That’s even more unreasonable than what you usually do... Okay, I’ll go with jam pastries, then. Like strawberry jam. It’s red, so.”

“Jam pastries... I see.”

Aidy thought, then answered.

"I understand. Rei, you have a simple heart."

"S-Simple?"

Hearing that, Rokuko nodded meaningfully. "You're not wrong. But how did you get that from jam pastries?"

"Because her reasoning was simple as it being red like blood, no? It's cute, but terribly simple-minded."

Rei swallowed the urge to point out that it didn't have anything to do with the pastry itself. Aidy was her Master's guest, after all. She could have said "blood sausage" or "hot dogs" to try to wiggle out of it, but that probably would have earned her a similar reading.

"By the way, Aidy, you sure seem close with Rei."

"Of course. I quite like her. Do you still refuse to give her to me?"

"Duh. She's one of our top dungeon administrators."

Rei just smiled and stayed silent, but thankfully that was enough for the two girls. They left the church in search of more targets.

"What's my favorite pastry? Ummm, I guess sweet pea paste rolls?"

A surprisingly normal answer from their next target: one of the Silkies that had been drying clothes by the inn. All the Silkies looked almost identical so it was hard to say for sure, but it was probably Hanna.

"Is that because it's green, perhaps?" Aidy asked.

"No, it's because it's the same color as big sis Kinue."

And there you had it. Incidentally, the Silkies changed how they referred to Kinue based on their mood at the time: big sis Kinue, captain Kinue, head maid Kinue, etc. Today they felt like calling her big sis.

"How is that different from choosing it because it's green?" Rokuko asked.

"There is a WORLD of difference between picking it because it's green and picking it because it's big sis Kinue's color. Rokuko, think about it like this. Isn't there a difference between choosing black and choosing Master's color?"

"I think you're onto something. Okay, I approve of your reasoning. With that said. Aidy, your reading?"

Rokuko accepted Hanna's proclamation and passed the baton to Aidy. Her answer?

"Well, I have never eaten a sweet pea paste roll before."

It was not a pastry she had tasted herself.

"It is different from tea cream rolls, correct?"

"Correct. Let me just buy one now... Here."

Rokuko bought one with DP and handed it to Aidy. She split it open and confirmed that it had green-colored sweet paste inside. She took a bite, but didn't really learn anything from it.

“Hm. Well, I suppose I can just say she has highly personal fixations?”

“That seems kind of lazy.”

“It will do. This isn’t my primary profession, after all.”

Rokuko wasn’t really that invested either. They were on the verge of dropping the game entirely.

While they were there, they returned to the dining hall and asked Kinue her preference. Hanna came with them.

“Hm? My favorite kind of pastry...? I will go with syrup waffles.”

“Hear that, Hanna? That’s what Kinue herself likes.”

“W-Well, that won’t change what color she is, so it’s okay.”

“True,” Rokuko said. Luckily, Aidy had eaten waffles before. They were the things with boxed ridges like a fence.

“So, why waffles?”

“All the nooks and crevices make it perfect for cleaning, no?”

One had to remember that Kinue loved cleaning above all else.

“Another one for personal fixations,” Aidy concluded.

“Aren’t you just repeating yourself now?”

“Such is the nature of spiritual readings. Truly, it is through being vague and half-hearted that they gain universal application for so many.”

“I’m just gonna say okay, you have a point there.”

Thus, they grew bored of the game, and just as they were about to stop playing...

“Yooo, Rokuko! Aidy! What about my pastry reading? I love me some curry rolls!”

Ichika rolled in despite supposedly being busy elsewhere. Someone must have told her about this.

“Oh my, Ichika. We were just bringing this to a close.”

“Awww, whaaat?!”

Ichika groaned with despair, which earned an amused giggle from Aidy.

“Very well, then... I will give you a pastry reading. Let’s see here... Curry rolls, hm?”

“I got this. Redra loves these super spicy ones. I showed you these before, remember?”

Just like she did with Hanna, Rokuko bought a curry roll and handed it to Aidy.

“Hm. This is spicy?”

“Uh-huh. It is curry, so...”

“Then... I conclude she likes curry.”

“So lazy!”

And so, due to Aidy growing kinda bored of it, the pastry readings came to a close.

Chapter 3

A lot of time had passed since Aidy first came to visit.

"I am bored," she said, sliding into my office unannounced.

There was a pause. "I am bored," she repeated.

"Why not go hang out with Rokuko?"

"To put it simply, no matter how close we are, there is only so much time we can spend together before running out of topics to discuss. It also seems that Rei is avoiding me somewhat."

Yeah, Rei mentioned that to me. She couldn't relax since Aidy was staring at her like a predator all day at work. Must be nice to be so loved.

"Incidentally, this question may make me appear insane, but would you care to explain why there hasn't been a single monster attack on the city in three entire weeks?"

"I mean... this isn't the Demon Realm. The kind of safety here is actually something to be proud of."

Don't think of the empire as a constant battleground like the Demon Realm is.

"What about dueling with Niku, Redra, and Misha?"

"The pup is as of yet too weak to satisfy me. It would be unsightly of me to demand more duels with Redra when I cannot even defeat her myself. Misha simply runs at the sight of me, and as vexing as this is, I am no match for those legs of hers."

Hm, I see. So then...

"Do something about this boredom, town chief."

"I guess that is my job..."

Oh well. I did say I'd look after her, so...

"Sigh. Well, I finished all I need to do here as a figurehead, so how about we go outside of town?"

"A trip, hm? In that case, let us journey in search for those I can slaughter without restraint! I would truly like to cut someone down already, you understand."

Whew. Violent as ever, I see.

"Listen, Aidy..."

"I know, I know. In the empire, it is not proper to cut down civilians without reason. I am learning, town chief. Which is why we shall not search for just any people... We shall search for villains to massacre in the name of justice!"

Okay, that sounds even worse, somehow.

“Do you have any ideas as to where evil might be gathering?”

“Er, well... I guess there’s the slums in Tsia?”

“Off we go, then. I know where Tsia is. Follow me.” Aidy began walking off.

“Uh. Hey, wait!”

“I will leave you behind if you do not follow. Ahaha, you are all mine for now.”

Jesus. This peace must be really eating her alive. The look on her face was deadly serious, and I mean “deadly” literally. She looks like an actual serial killer right now. Holy cow.

I passed Niku on the way and brought her with me as I chased after Aidy.

“Ahaha. The slum is by the south gate, correct?”

“L-Let me just say now... that... not everyone who looks like a thug actually is a thug, alright? Don’t just cut down every evil-looking person you see, alright...?” I said between pants.

Also, if we’re gonna be walking the whole way there, at least let me take some breaks. I may be using Golem Assistance, but I’m still tired... Why isn’t Niku tired? Is this the difference regular exercise makes?

“I can be patient if it is necessary for murder,” Aidy replied with quite a radiant smile.

“Master. Forgive me. If I were strong, I could satisfy Aidy on my own.”

“Don’t sweat it, Niku. It’s not your fault.”

There are some people in the world who just can’t stand peace, and by that I mean exclusively Demon Realm people. It was that simple. Or really, the Demon Realm probably had a different definition of “peace” than us. That, too, was culture.

We arrived at the south gate. To get inside we needed to go through an inspection, and after showing the guards our adventurer cards to prove our identities, they gave us crisp salutes. B-Rank adventurers just got that kind of treatment—we didn’t need to pay the entrance fee either. The whole process was a lot more organized than I remembered it being, which was a bit concerning, but we passed through the gate.

And there was... *not* the dirty slum I remembered. I mean, there were some shoddy shacks for sure, but they were built along the side of a proper road, and the merchant stands on the street were proudly displaying actual permits.

In short—there was peace and order. There weren’t downtrodden hobos sitting on the edge of the roads with dead looks in their eyes, nor were there thugs swaggering about looking for a fight. There were even guards chatting cheerfully with citizens while patrolling.

Aidy must have sensed the peace in the air too. She narrowed her

eyes, displeased.

“Are there truly vandals I can cut down here?”

“Uhhhh. This is pretty different from the slums I know. The heck’s going on?”

I decided to ask a store owner for info.

“The slum thugs? Aaah, the archduke went and kicked all of them out. Seems like he hired a ridiculously skilled adventurer for help and wiped out the whooole Last Commune, the group of criminals that ruled the slums.”

Apparently it was so peaceful now that stores approved by the archduke could readily open stands. Even the guards the Last Commune had hired were recruited by Tsia itself, such that they were now patrolling as apprentice soldiers.

“Any chance that some of those soldiers are a little, uh, excessively cruel? Inhumanely violent? Any of them that the world would be better without?”

“Hahaha! Nope! There’s that adventurer I mentioned from before, y’know? The archduke’s threatening everyone saying if they pull any crap, he’ll have them turn themselves in just like the Last Commune members did! It’s hilarious!”

More than a few people had seen the Last Commune members turn themselves in, so that threat really held water. *That’s ridiculous. He’s obviously just bluffing! You can trust me, because I’m that adventurer!*

“M-Master...”

“.....”

I glanced at Aidy. *Welp. That’s one beaming smile. I only wish it wasn’t beaming an urge to murder everyone in sight.*

“This isn’t what we discussed, town chief. I said I wished to search for villains to cut down, no? Or, what, do you wish for me to murder that skilled adventurer?”

“Wait, Aidy. This is just a big mistake. Also, don’t blame the adventurer. It’s not his fault. He was just doing his job. Okay?”

“Very well... It would be foolish for me to hate an adventurer I do not even know,” Aidy said, sighing to vent out her wrath.

Seeing that, the merchant butted in to try to cheer her up. “Oh, y’know, I hear that adventurer is actually the town chief of Goren. He’s a real womanizer, so a pretty girl like you should have no problem at all meeting him if you want to.”

Why would you ever say that? What do you mean I’m a womanizer? Hm? Because there’s so many babes at my inn and church? Ngh! I can’t argue!

“Oh? Interesting.” Aidy smiled, with her eyes narrowed down to slits.

“Er. Aidy?”

“Oh, fear not. I won’t end you, town chief. Certainly not. You are merely a model citizen that eliminated the evil before me. Aaah, how frustrating. It’s a shame I cannot show your heroic feats to Rokuko. What should I do, town chief?”

Gaah! She’s playing it cool, but she’s super pissed!

“A-Alright. Let’s go to the central district of Tsia.”

“To what end?”

“Gathering information. I just spent a month in the Demon Realm and I haven’t left town since getting back. All my info is way out of date. We’ll find villains faster by calming down and collecting some info!” I declared, mainly just to get myself out of this mess.

“I see... That is certainly logical,” Aidy replied, some of her anger cooling down.

Alright, let’s go to the Adventurer’s Guild! Hey, no need for us to obsess over villains when we can just hunt wild monsters!

“My apologies, Lord Goren. At the moment there are no notable extermination quests in Tsia.”

“O-Oh, okay.”

We went to the Adventurer’s Guild and had them show us every extermination quest available to B-Ranks, but aside from the normal Goblin and rabbit quests that were always available there wasn’t anything but dungeon exploration stuff. Of course, Aidy wouldn’t invade the dungeon of an associate without reason, no matter how much she wanted to slaughter.

“Why are there so few extermination quests...?”

“Well, I believe that is largely due to your influence.”

According to the guild employee who was helping us, the adventurers who came during the Dragon business cleared out most of the major quests. The adventurers that stayed in Goren and Tsia afterwards handled most of the quests that came up later as well. Why did those adventurers stay? To help in case of another Dragon attack, because the saint-like town chief paid two entire gold coins for each individual who helped, the Beddhist church was amazing, exploring the nearby Cave of Greed was pretty profitable, and so on—all reasons connected to Goren.

“In other words...?”

“It is largely due to Goren’s influence, and thus your influence, I believe.”

Hmm, why do I feel death behind me?

“Town chief?”

“Hahaha. Well, it was right to gather information! Better this than wandering around Tsia aimlessly, am I right?”

“Yes. So? What should I do now? Hm? Answer me. You have an answer, don’t you? Don’t you, town chief? Hmm? Hmmm?”

Pressure. I could feel the pressure. Honestly, palpable pressure was worse than just murderous intent. I was used to Haku wanting to murder me, so...

"Hey, it's simple. Remember all the extermination quests we did in Mikan?"

"Yes. To Mikan, then?"

"No, the opposite. You already cleared out all the extermination quests in Mikan, so we should go to Pavella next."

Maybe they'll have a slum of their own. Not to mention Pavella is close to the Holy Kingdom; I'm sure the evil organization trying to assassinate me has a base there... I mean, they have to, right? Now that Tsia's slums are all cleaned up, there's not really any good place to hide out here. They have to be in Pavella! Actually, why aren't any assassins coming after me right now?! Why?! I'm totally out of Misha's sight! Why won't you come when Aidy's so passionately waiting for you...? Actually, that's probably why. Aidy kicked the shit out of every adventurer in town, including Niku. I would definitely hold off on attacking until the ungodly strong Demon Realm visitor left.

And so, we briefly returned to Goren. We used a carriage this time, as it was fastest to use this route to reach Pavella.

"I would not like to waste my time again. How would you feel about repaying me by allowing me to slice off one of your arms the next time you take me to a dead end?"

"Aidy," Niku said, "I think you're taking it too far."

"I am serious, pup. Weaklings like you have no place to talk."

Niku faltered and fell silent. *I mean, if Niku's a weakling then everyone in Goren is a... well... Alright, you got me. We're all weaklings. I'm the weakling town chief of Weakling Town.*

"But don't worry, Aidy. It won't be a dead end this time. We've narrowed down all our options."

"Sigh... I had high hopes, you know, when I saw that Goren had no meaningful walls to speak of. I thought it would have as many monster attacks as the Demon Realm, or at least half as many. And yet, what did I get? Nothing. Not even Goblin raids. Why is it so dreadfully peaceful here? There would be riots in the Demon Realm."

Yeah, I mean, I guess you're already kicking up a one-loli riot over here, so...

We got out of the carriage and went to leave straight for Pavella, but Rokuko saw us at the plaza and came running over.

"Aidy, Keima. Where'd you run off to with Niku? Geez, I was looking all over for you."

"Er, sorry. I was just being a good host for Aidy." I glanced her way and saw Aidy let out a small sigh while making no attempt to hide her dissatisfaction.

“Indeed. My apologies, Rokuko. I am out of patience and on the verge of snapping. I’ll be borrowing the town chief a bit longer, if you don’t mind. The details are a tad embarrassing and I would prefer you not ask,” she said.

Rokuko blinked in surprise, put a thoughtful hand on her chin, narrowed her eyes, then whispered to me carefully. “Just to be sure, this isn’t anything lewd, is it?”

Uh, no? Not sure if you can see her down there, but Niku’s with us.

As I placed an exasperated hand on my forehead, Aidy tilted her head in confusion.

“Erm, lewd things? What exactly are you referring to, I wonder?”

“Wha? Um, like, kissing...? Or since this is Keima we’re talking about, hiding in the shadows and smelling your feet?”

“Hm? Why ever would we do that?”

“B-Because he likes it? Oh, are things different in the Demon Realm?” Rokuko’s guard lowered due to Aidy looking so surprised.

And about that feet smelling... I mean, sure, I do have a foot fetish, so that’s completely in my ballpark, but why is Rokuko thinking up things like that? Where’d she learn about it?

“I see, this must be a difference in culture then. We may kiss and bite each other in Demon Realm, but never smell each other’s feet. At most, there are some races that smell each other’s rear ends, but that has nothing to do with me.”

“Okay. Good, then.”

“Incidentally, to what end were you looking for us? If there are monsters that need exterminating, or the [Flame Caverns] has requested a duel, then I will gladly accept.”

“Oh, nothing that serious. It’s more that Redra and Igni won’t be able to play at all for a while.”

“Just awful.”

I didn’t know the exact circumstances, but at the very least their lives weren’t in danger. The problem, then, was one of Aidy’s few methods of venting stress here had just disappeared.

“I will need your assistance now more than ever, town chief.”

“What are you making Keima do?”

“I am having him prepare toys for me. There were none available to slaughter in Tsia,” Aidy said with a melancholic look, and that was enough for Rokuko to put the pieces together.

“And that’s why you were on the way to Pavella. In that case, shouldn’t you bring Ichika instead of Niku? She’s from Pavella, remember. I’m sure she’d be a better guide.”

“Good point. Sounds like a plan... Though she’ll have to wear the mask.”

“I am certainly fine with that,” Aidy said.

We waited a bit, then switched out Niku for Ichika. She was hesitant as always to visit Pavella, but some curry roll negotiating and the maid mask settled things quickly, and soon we were on our way.

Once we passed through the Tsia tunnel and arrived at Dragg, Ichika... or rather, the masked maid gave a suggestion.

"Y'know, Master. How about we ask Cid if he knows anything?"

"Hm? Oh, yeah, nice idea."

On second thought, if I had asked Maiodore before going to Tsia she probably could have told me about the slums being cleaned up and the total lack of extermination quests. Aidy was in such a rush I didn't really think things through.

"Well, you heard her. Mind if we take a detour, Aidy?"

"Certainly not, if it means speeding things up."

Aidy was a bit unsatisfied, but with her permission we headed to Dragg's chief residence. It was an abrupt visit without any appointment, but we were led right to the same parlor as always to see Cid.

"Sorry for the sudden visit, Cid."

"Think nothing of it, Keima. We're allies, no? But in any case. Who is that with you?"

"Right. This is Aidy, the princess from the Demon Realm I mentioned before."

Aidy glanced at Cid once, then sniffed. Did she think that was a decent greeting? Nah, she was probably just too annoyed to care. I decided not to say anything, since disturbing her at all ran the risk of getting cut down.

"Anyway, let me cut straight to the chase. The princess is not in a good mood, as you can see. Are there any villains on death row or monsters that need to be exterminated here? What about Pavella?"

Cid furrowed his brow. "That is... a fairly violent question."

"Sorry. I could've picked my words better. Right now I'm in a bit of a Demon Realm mindset."

"That is Demon Realm style...? What a fearsome place," Cid replied, like most empire citizens would.

"Point being, if you need extra military power for something or another, just say the word. We want to help."

"No need to dress your words. Aidy wants to go on a legally endorsed rampage, and so you want me to offer up victims, even criminals if necessary. Is that right?"

"Yep, though the stronger the victims are, the better. She kinda lost her patience with my town, you see... Don't worry about the princess's safety. Any opponent stronger than Kuro will do."

"Excuse me? At the very least, there's nobody in Dragg that can hold a candle to you or Lady Kuroinu... Well, that aside. I don't know

if the princess will like them, but I can introduce you to some dangerous fellows in Pavella.” Cid snapped his fingers, and a butler standing behind him stepped forward with a map. “This is a map of Pavella.”

“You’re well prepared. I mean, not that I’m complaining.”

“What can I say? You came at the right time. From my perspective, it even looks like you planned this all out yourself... But in any case, this is where public order is poorly maintained.” Cid tapped the east side of Pavella City. “We’re still in the middle of backing them into a corner, but an organization known as the Bloody Kraken is hiding out here, in the slums outside Pavella’s walls. They’re not tax-paying citizens and thus not anyone I care to protect. Feel free to slaughter them, though we do want at least a few left alive to serve as meat shields in case the Holy Kingdom invades.”

Aidy’s lips curved into a grin. “Aha,ahaha... There are toys for me to play with there?”

“Y-Yes. The organization deals with addictive drugs and questionably effective medicine, so we were just in the middle of planning how to get rid of them,” Cid explained, looking a bit weirded out by Aidy’s murderous grin. “Given the scale of their operations, we can guess they are working with one or more Pavella nobles.”

“I see. In short, I can kill them?”

“Preferably after getting information out of them, but yes. We want to know who’s funding them.”

“I see. In short, I can kill them?”

“.....Yes.”

“I see! In short, I can kill them!”

Aidy beamed a smile that covered her whole face. All I could say was, I felt bad for the members of the Blood Kraken.

“Come with me, town chief!”

“Whoa, hold on! Sorry, Cid.”

“Pay it no mind, Keima. Take this and read it on the road, for reference. And... please try to settle this peacefully.”

Aidy was already rushing out of the parlor, having memorized the location Cid had pointed to on the map. I took the memo and chased after her with Ichika.

I checked over the memo while riding the rocky carriage to Pavella.

“Sooo, Master. That something you got from Cid?”

“Yeah. Specifically, it’s a memo of what kind of crimes the members of the Bloody Kraken are committing.”

“For real? Lemme see.” Since there were no other riders in the carriage, Ichika slid her mask to the side and peered at the memo.

Apparently, they were selling addictive drugs, selling potions with

poisonous effects, kidnapping women, children, and beastkin to sell as slaves, and more. The Last Commune in Tsia had been pretty tame, but these guys were basically trying to eat Pavella alive from within. It was possible all the baddies we'd failed to get in Tsia had just moved over to Pavella to cause chaos.

"I get it. Y'know, I'm pretty sure Cid was gonna ask for your help with this to begin with, Master."

"Hm? Why's that?"

"This is Pavella business but it went all the way to Cid, soooo, just think about it. Dragg's right in the middle between Pavella and Goren, so anything sent your way would pass through him. Not to mention that you did a hella good job smashing the Last Commune."

Yeaaaah, and even now that's being used to intimidate the slums into shape. I guess it is pretty likely they'd use my history there as a reason to hire me for this too. Not that I want to increase the number of Succuma-obsessed musclemen out there.

"Though judging by that last line, they might've changed their mind about getting your help, Master."

"'Reliable Information: Attempted Assassination of the Beddhist High Priestess,' huh?"

Now that they're targeting me, I can see why they'd be hesitant to hire me to destroy the organization attempting to assassinate me. Is the source of this "reliable information" Misha? Well, either way, these are the guys going after my Rei. Hm.

"Anyway, they want you to clean them up, but how're you planning to do that?"

"My biggest priority here is relieving Aidy's stress. I didn't take this as an official quest, so I don't care about letting some of them escape or whatever. We'll do what we can with violence and leave it at that."

"Uh-huh. If only they gave us a little more time, but they didn't."

If I tried taking a whole week this time, Aidy would fucking snap. And then she would snap me, as in, break my spine. Oh, and she's going home after another week, now that I think about it. Guess I really should just let her run wild here. If we miss anyone, they can just spread the word of what happens when you mess with us.

"You heard the man, Aidy. Try and leave the higher-ups alive if you can, okay, girlfriend?"

"Hm? That sounds annoying. I wish to slaughter them all."

"Wouldn't it be totes boring if you just killed them all at once? I'm sure it'd be way more fun if you juiced some info out of them first. Or what, can you not handle that?"

"A fair point. Very well, I accept."

Ichika had cleverly talked Aidy down. She was great at this kind

of stuff, which I appreciated a lot.

“But I’m gonna guess Cid’s right about Pavella nobles being behind this, and if we keep going further it’s totes gonna be the Holy Kingdom stirring up this junk.”

“If we know that much, would it not be fine to kill them all? Or rather, shall we go to the Holy Kingdom to send an even stronger message...? Ahaha, I joke of course. Mwahaha, ahahahaha!”

Could anyone blame me for just smiling uncomfortably? Who knew whether she was serious or not.

We climbed out of the carriage once we could see the tops of buildings peeking over the city walls. This time we didn’t go inside; instead we hugged the wall on our way to the east side of the city. Though... in retrospect, I could have just used {Teleportation} to get here. What a waste of time and effort. At least I saved some mana.

I got the feeling telling Aidy that would make her lose her shit, so I just kept quiet for now. She hadn’t noticed either, so we were equally guilty here.

“Bleeeh. I’m totally not pumped to be home, but, well, not like I can refuse an order from Master and Rokuko.”

“Are there those you would truly dread seeing what lies beneath your mask, maid?”

“Yuppers. Way back in the day I stirred up a lotta trouble with some of the other kids. I’m gonna guess some of them are still in the slums, and that sucks big time.”

“You will perhaps know someone in the Bloody Kraken, then?”

“Probs, but don’t sweat it. They won’t recognize me in this outfit anyway,” Ichika said, sighing and waving a hand.

“Here we are, the slums,” I announced. They were just like how the slums in Tsia used to be, with shoddy tents held up with branches and such strewn about the misshapen roads.

We stepped inside and instantly drew attention. Aidy’s pretty red dress stood out a lot among all the people wrapped up in cruddy rags. Ichika and I did a bit too, since we were clean, but Aidy was an especially beautiful young girl, which made her stand out all the more. Though Ichika’s mask made her stick out a lot too.

But the look in their eyes was different from the one we’d seen in Tsia—they gleamed like we were their prey. I couldn’t tell if that was due to our fancy clothes or because these slums were just more serious than Tsia’s.

“Yup, the air here sure is nasty,” Ichika said while readjusting her mask. It was important to remember, though, that thanks to {Purification} the slums were incomparably clean compared to what the slums of Middle-Ages Europe would have looked like on Earth. In

short, the air was nasty not in the literal sense, but rather in the sense that crimes were obviously being committed here. I understood what Ichika meant even with the auto-translator at work.

“What’s the plan, Aidy?”

“Oh my, is it not obvious? I shall start by cleaning up some of the trash,” Aidy said, rapidly unsheathing her Magic Blade. Many of the people watching us scattered upon seeing the ruby-red blade, but not everyone did. There were elderly folk with bad legs, drug-addled vegetables without any light in their eyes, and thugs who cared more about stealing Aidy’s sword than running from it.

“Aha!” A wide grin formed on Aidy’s face. Who could blame her? After so long, she had finally found the villains she could murder in the name of justice without complaint.

“May I begin?”

“Sure. I’ll just leave this to you.”

The evil-looking thugs approached as we talked. There were eight of them in total: a mix of humans and beastkin. They surrounded the three of us. If they thought they could beat us when we were clearly adventurers, they probably could have just settled down and done honest work at the guild... Oh well. Their lives were now Aidy’s.

“We need to get information from them too. Leave at least one alive.”

“Very well.”

Aidy shot me a beaming smile, then without even turning her head cut down the man who leaped at her from behind. There was a pause, then his body split in two from top to bottom.

“I appreciate your confession of love, but I am not fond of weaklings.”

“Wha? Guh... Gah!”

Eugh. Guro warning.

The thug wriggled on the ground, blood pouring from his body as he failed to breathe due to both of his lungs being crushed. The seven other thugs just froze in place, having no idea what had just happened.

“My, my. So full of openings.”

“Ah.”

“Uh.”

“Eep.”

“Oh!”

“Guh.”

Pausing at all was a fatal mistake around Aidy. Within seconds five of them had their heads removed from their bodies. One of the two survivors finally turned around to flee, while the other crumbled to the ground in fear and pissed himself.

“Aaah, hunting humans truly is fun. Don’t you agree, town chief?”

“Not really, since I’m a human. I could take it or leave it.”

“A shame.”

I would say that’s a pretty inhumane statement to make, but she is a Dungeon Core, after all. Humans are basically like rabbits to her.

Aidy flung her Magic Blade with a smile while surrounded by headless corpses spewing blood. It pierced the back of the thug who fled, who fell over with a large hole in his chest once she made her blade disappear. Judging by the positioning and flood of blood, she had hit him directly in the heart. Rest in peace.

Maybe I should have worn a mask myself. One with eye covers, that is. God, there’s so much blood and gore. I need to use {Purification} on the air. {Purification}.

Anyway, that left the one survivor, Mr. Pisspants.

“E-Eeek! I’m sorry, don’t kill me! You can have my money, all of it! And my drugs! I’ll never break the law again!”

He pleaded for his life without a care for how pathetic he looked. Knowing that people like him would turn right back to crime once things calmed down, I got right to gathering information.

“Drugs, huh? Are they from the Bloody Kraken?”

“Y-Yup. L-Lemme guess, you guys came here for the drugs? Ahaha, yeah, they sure are addictive! Yup, alright, I’ll sell you as many as you wa—”

“Hm? You want us to kill you?”

“Eep! Sorry, sorry, sorry! Take it all!”

The man took out some rolled-up cloth with the drugs inside. *Yeah, I don’t want this crap.* I looked inside just to check and saw vials of some red liquid.

“Alright. How about you tell us where you got these drugs?”

“Er, well... I got it from that guy.” He pointed to the guy that was cut in half. *Whoops.*

“Okay, next question. We’re looking for the Bloody Kraken’s home base.”

“I-I can’t tell you! They’ll kill me!”

So you know, huh? Neat, I thought, and that was when Aidy butted into the interrogation.

“It sounds like he wants to die now. Can I kill him, town chief? Hm? Hmmmm?” She pressured me with a smile.

“Uh, sure. We can find someone else.”

“Yay!”

“I’ll tell you! Wait! Just give me a se—” the man started, holding up his hands as Aidy lifted her blade, but it was too late. Aidy’s Magic Blade cut him in half. Vertically.

Eugh. Guro warning. Too late for him.

“What should we do with the corpses?”

“I suggest we leave them. Surely the city will dispose of them as they please.”

“Ah. Dunno about that, Aidy. Think you could burn them without making any smoke?” Ichika asked, completely unfazed by the corpses. She had some guts. Even I faltered a bit with this many gory corpses around.

“That is possible. Why?”

“I mean, if we just leave these brutalized corpses everywhere, it’ll be harder to hunt our next prey, y’know?”

“Oh my. You are a wise one, masked maid.”

At Ichika’s recommendation Aidy touched a corpse and made it vanish.

“Whoa, momma. How’d you do that?” Ichika asked.

“I simply converted them to DP. Rokuko can do the same,” Aidy replied while making the other corpses disappear as well. All it took was a bit of {Purification} afterwards and there was no sign at all that eight people had been murdered.

“Oh no. They got away before we could learn anything from them. Where shall we go next?” Aidy said in a blatantly deadpan voice while running to the east of the slums.

“Heya, little girl. Ain’t it dangerous to be walkin’ out here all alone? Lemme guide you... to the slavers!”

Baddies were baited to Aidy. Aidy handled them. The baddies disappeared.

“Oh no. They got away before we could learn anything from them. Where shall we go next?” Aidy said in a blatantly deadpan voice while running to the north side of the slums.

“Ohoho, look at you, rich girl. Gimme all you got!”

Baddies were baited to Aidy. Aidy handled them. The baddies disappeared.

“Oh no. They got away before we could learn anything from them. Where shall we go next?” Aidy said in a blatantly deadpan voice while running to the west side of the slums.

“What’s an outsider like you doing in a place like this? Gimme yer money! And yer life!”

Baddies were baited to Aidy. Aidy handled them. The baddies disappeared.

So yeah. We went all over the place but didn’t actually get much information about the Bloody Kraken. At best, it helped dissipate Aidy’s stress a little.

“Not so, town chief. A slaughter this effortless only builds my stress further, especially after how long I’ve been made to wait. I need stronger foes... But I will not be greedy. Someone as strong as that pup

of yours from months ago will suffice.”

“Pretty sure anyone that strong would just be doing normal adventurer work.”

“If we flip that around, can we not conclude someone as strong as the pup would be a leader of the organization?”

Good point. That seems logical.

“Hold up, girlfriend. This isn’t the Demon Realm, remember? Niku’s hella strong. Sure, she’s weak as heck compared to you, but think about everyone else you fought. I’m gonna say the leaders here are probably, like, Gozou level,” Ichika interjected.

“Yeah. Even before going to the Demon Realm, Niku was strong enough to literally swing a famous knight around like a club.”

“Ah... That is quite depressing.” Aidy let out a sigh of dissatisfaction at the revelation that her enemies would be even weaker than she expected somehow. Well, there wasn’t much we could do about that. Just today we had already sacrificed dozens of lives to her. Honestly, I felt kind of like a servant of the Demon King helping commit atrocities.

“In that case, the next time I encounter a strong foe, I will leave him alive on the verge of death and follow him back to his nest.”

The way Aidy put that really made it sound like she considered this hunting. The silver lining was that the only people dying here were those dumb and evil enough to attack a weak-looking girl with two bodyguards nearby.

Anyway, we offered up more sacrifices to the blood god and tricked a few of them into going to their nest... or, rather, their base, which seemed to be a drug-producing factory for the Bloody Kraken. There were drawers full of the blood-red vials from before.

“Aaah! Aaah! What a waste to just use the shells and toss the meat... Sigh, I can’t eat this. It’d taste good, but I’d probably die,” my masked maid moaned while seeing the pies of red sea urchins and their removed shells. A little bit of it would be fine, but apparently they were poisonous urchins that paralyzed you if you ate too much. The shells were filled with even more poison—addicting poison, at that. They were extracting just the addictive bits and making drugs out of it.

Though actually, there’s a ton of evidence just lying around here. Letters, ledgers, recipes for the poison, contracts... There’s traps to destroy all the evidence, but my masked maid had already disarmed them. What a skilled gal.

And from the documents we learned an incredibly unfortunate reality. The base we were in was in fact the home base of the Bloody Kraken. We had destroyed their home base without even realizing it.

“Town chief. Shall we split up to cover more ground?” Aidy asked,

checking over the documents strewn about. They detailed the locations of several other bases in the slums, and although they probably weren't that strong, there were ten bosses in the organization to match how squids had ten tentacles. Aidy wanted to massacre them all. Just to kill time.

"You know I'll have to take responsibility for any problems you cause, right?"

"This base had their strongest fighters, did it not? Don't worry. I imagine there is not a person in this entire slum that will pose any threat to me. What's the harm? There is no longer any need for us to hide. I wish to murder to my heart's content."

"Fine, fine... But you're responsible for yourself here. Swear you won't make me take responsibility for anything you do. With contract magic, if possible."

I was annoyed enough with the hunting that I just gave up trying to stay involved. All I cared about was finally being free of protecting the princess. I really didn't think hard about it.

Aidy's Perspective

Using the notes given to her by Keima, Aidy demolished the Bloody Kraken's bases one by one. There were ten bosses in the organization, to match a squid's ten tentacles, with two of them being especially strong... However, one of those two had been the one that Aidy had left alive to run back to their home base, so that told you all you needed to know about how strong they really were. Judging from the other documents, she could guess that she had killed half of the others while running around the slums baiting thugs out.

"Goodness. To think a country could be so weak..."

It was a shocking disappointment to her. However, she had slaughtered enough small fry to at least hold herself over until the end of the trip.

"I shall have him reward me with chocolate cornets for my trouble later. That brings me some solace, at least."

Aidy headed to the next location after converting the corpses into DP.

"Hm, well, I suppose I can simply burn the buildings down."

She had been told not to wrap up innocent civilians in her rampage, so she caused a bit of chaos, didn't chase after those who ran, and cut down all those who attacked her. She freed the women, children, and beastkin locked in cages, allowed them to run away, then set fire to the buildings for fun.

"Now then, next up is the last one."

She had reached the fifth base, without having much hope for it at

all. The memo said that it was a production facility, but...

“A dungeon...? I sense something strange...”

In the cellar of that base was a dungeon. But it was a dungeon that felt unlike any she had sensed before. The air around it was thick like a black mist. Aidy was struck with the feeling that she was looking at a moving corpse—a Zombie.

“Well, regardless. I shall finish cleaning up and then go treat myself.”

Aidy ignored the feeling, however, and went to hunt down the final survivors of the Bloody Kraken. Oceanic monsters capable of operating on land were there and attacked only Aidy, ignoring the survivors for some reason. She deflected the poison needles the red urchins shot at her and advanced down the one-hall dungeon with doors along the side.

It was such a simplistic dungeon that even with the strange feeling she almost wanted to conclude this was a normal cellar, but her instincts told her it really was a dungeon.

Peering into the rooms revealed hunched-together slaves in rags, piles of urchins, and black herbs growing. Aidy recalled that the memo described this place as a production facility.

“I suppose the Core here is exceedingly cooperative with them?”

Or perhaps the Dungeon Master was involved. In terms of Pavella dungeons one would first think of the [Flame Caverns], but this was clearly an oceanic dungeon. It was unlikely they were the same. It was possible for a Dungeon Master to ignore a Core’s distinctive traits when making a dungeon, but it was hard to imagine Redra making a dungeon like this. More likely it was the Master of an oceanic Core making this on the side. As far as Aidy remembered, she had seen a Kraken at the dungeon gatherings before. It was like a large squid that could walk on land. They were of the same lot, and... she forgot his number, but she remembered he had already been hunted.

“Hm.”

It was a plain, single-hallway dungeon. Aidy finally reached the final room while hunting down the last remnants. Inside was a black Dungeon Core. Thick, dark vines—Tentacles? Something?—were stabbing into it. Aidy grimaced with twitching eyebrows, unable to hide her disgust. One of the survivors was fiddling with a panel. Was he the Dungeon Master? If so, what was with the panel? It wasn’t a normal dungeon menu.

“Geh! I’m... I’m not gonna fall here! I’m the man who got Duston, the knight commander of a former count, serving under me! I’m gonna rule Pavella one day! AND YET?! WHERE THE FUCK ARE YOU, DUSTOOOON?! Gaaah! Work already, shit, fuck, FUUUCK!”

“You there. Are you this place’s Master?” Aidy asked just to be

sure, despite her disgust.

“Huh?! What’s that even mean?! Die! Strong people gotta destroy dungeons! That’s just how it works! So why’re you here, FUUUCK! FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK! EVERYONE BUT ME IS SHIIIIIT!”

“My goodness. I thought I would spare you if you were this place’s Master, but that seems to not be the case.”

The man slammed his fingers against the panel while looking at Aidy with bloodshot eyes. “Everybody’s shit, everybody! Brainwashing! I’m gonna brainwash you! This is a last resort I can only use once, but it’s worth it! I’m gonna make you into my slave! Even a freak like you is worth it since you’re so strong and good-looking! I’ll use you until you die!”

It happened in an instant. Small cracks popped all over the Core’s surface, and then a thick black mist sprayed out of those cracks.

“Poison? Darkness? Neither of those work against me.”

Aidy paid the mist no mind. That was a mistake.

“Ah... Ngh?”

Her body wavered, with her vision flashing. Something had definitely impacted her. Aidy determined that the mist was undoubtedly attacking her.

“Gyaaahahahaha! How do you like them apples, huh?! Now you’re my slave! You gotta obey my every word! Now, takes off your clothes and kneel! You’re gonna lick my feet first! Cry tears of gratitude! This is your punishment for trying to kill me! Oh, yeah, and as a reward I’ll let you lick my asshole! Shit’s gonna be a good match for your face! Geheheheheh!”

Aidy swung her sword and chopped the man beyond the darkness in half, interrupting his disgusting ranting.

“Geh... heh?”

His death throes were just as pathetic. What, did he think she couldn’t cut him down? It didn’t take someone like Aidy to identify where he was when he was shouting that much.

There was a thud—the sound of meat hitting the ground—and then it was quiet. The man had been so disgusting, Aidy elected to abandon his corpse rather than turn it into DP. She walked slowly, wavering as she did so. Her head was light as if she were drunk on alcohol, but the sense of disgust was worse than a hangover. Aidy eyed the strange, pitch-black Dungeon Core, which was no doubt at fault for this.

Though, was it really a Dungeon Core? It was truly abnormal, so disgusting to look at that words couldn’t quite describe it. Aidy shuddered, feeling as if a wretched tongue of malice were licking her all over.

“Now, what exactly should I do about this...?”

Aidy was quickly losing control of her body. She heard a voice in her head.

“_____, _____. _____... _____.”

“Aaah... I see. I certainly didn’t prepare to defend against this.”

As a final act of defiance, Aidy lethargically swung her sword onto the cracked Dungeon Core. It shattered like glass, and the black fragments shot throughout the room.

Aidy sighed in exasperation at her own mistake. She shut her eyes, praying that Keima and Rokuko would do something about this. The darkness filling the room concentrated around Aidy’s chest, then formed an ebony brooch.

There was a pause. Aidy stood still in the room now clear of mist, then opened her eyes. They were pitch-black as if the Dungeon Core had moved directly into her eye sockets. Her cute lips slid open.

“I must go destroy dungeons,” she said. Her footsteps wavered no longer.

Keima’s Perspective

The Bloody Kraken’s home base had a ton of documents covering all sorts of things. There were so many documents that even putting them all into {Storage} was a drag, not to mention all the kidnapped people providing further evidence. That pretty much sealed the Bloody Kraken’s fate, and Aidy was going around destroying the last few bases they had. I decided to have my masked maid call the guards and let them settle the rest.

“Yes, sir! Lord Cid told us you would be here.”

A dozen or so soldiers led by one of the archduke’s retainers came to the base. I had seen them before with Cid back in Dragg, so I could trust these weren’t fake soldiers here to destroy evidence. They even suggested I could deliver some of the evidence to Cid myself for safety’s sake. I refused since that sounded like a lot of extra work, though. The soldiers started saying stuff like “To think you would trust us with the fruits of such a heroic accomplishment,” “No, this means he doesn’t even consider something of this level to be significant at all,” “Either way... He is a titan of a man!” and such, but I ignored them.

We met up with Aidy. Perhaps due to having relieved her stress, she looked at ease.

“Town chief, I would like to return to Goren.”

“Hm? Yeah, sure. The soldiers have all the evidence now, so no reason to stick around.”

We would be returning in the middle of the night if we left by carriage now. I thought it would be better to spend the night in

Pavella before leaving, but there was no helping it if she wanted to go back now. No reason to refuse, really.

Wait, hold on...

“Let’s just use {Teleportation}.”

“Certainly,” she said casually, which I could interpret as her forgiving me for forgetting about {Teleportation} up until now.

Alright, perfect! Now I can go right home and get all the sleep I want. Good thing I waited to reveal this until after she blew off her stress and calmed down.

I put Ichika into {Storage}, then teleported to my room in the chief residence, where I found Rokuko rolling around on top of my bed, wrapped in my comforter.

“Rokuko?”

“Bwuh...? K-Keima?! Th-This isn’t what it looks like! I promise!” Rokuko shouted hurriedly.

“I don’t know what you think it looks like, but you’re obviously being a weirdo.”

“No, really, it’s all a big misunderstanding. I was just worried about when you would get home, so I—” Rokuko began, giving her excuses in a panic. That was when it happened. Aidy took out her Magic Blade and launched a sharp thrust at Rokuko. It pierced right through her... Or it would have, if it hadn’t been deflected by some invisible force. “Eep?!”

“Hm? My, my, why didn’t it go through? How strange.”

This time she swung her sword like a hammer, but it froze in mid-air right before hitting Rokuko in her quilt.

“S-Stop, Aidy! What are you doing?!” Rokuko cried.

“Strange. Aaah, so strange. At this rate I will be unable to destroy a dungeon.”

“H-Hey! What’s gotten into you?! Quit it, Aidy!”

“Town chief. Do not stop me. I must destroy dungeons.”

Aidy turned and looked me in the eyes. Her own eyes were pitch black and opened wide—she hardly looked sane. *Black? I’m pretty sure her eyes were like, uh, red.*

But now wasn’t the time for that kind of questioning. “Rokuko, run! Something’s weird here!” I yelled.

“R-Right!”

Rokuko didn’t protest and instantly disappeared with the quilt still wrapped around her. I could guess she had moved to the Master Room.

“Aah, she got away. What a shame.”

“What’s wrong with you? You’re acting strange.”

“Weird? No, Rokuko is the strange one here. My sword did not go through her.”

That was because the quilt Rokuko had on was actually the Divine Quilt, which had an invincibility defense. But putting that aside, why would Aidy attack Rokuko out of nowhere?

Brainwashing? Well, I know just the thing to do about that.

I took out the Divine Alarm Clock. If she had some status effect on her, this would cure her in a single—

“Oh?”

—Er, it would have cured her in a single second. Unfortunately, Aidy flicked her Magic Blade and launched the clock into the air before grabbing it. The clock was now in her hands.

“Uh.”

“I don’t know what you were about to do, but I’ll take this for now.”

What a careless mistake. Aidy threw the Divine Alarm Clock into her own {Storage}. Having no other way to fight her, I just broke out into a cold sweat as she faced me with a smile.

“It seems I must destroy you too,” Aidy said, and she swung her Magic Blade down at me... Only for me to be teleported to the Master Room in the next instant.

“Keima, are you okay?”

“Y-Yeah. Thanks, Rokuko.”

It seemed Rokuko had saved me in the nick of time. I let out a sigh of relief. We were safe, for now.

“As thanks, I won’t question what you were doing on my bed while wrapped up in that quilt.”

“Ngh. I was just sleeping, that’s all,” Rokuko said while hiding her face with her hands. *Man, seriously though, what was she doing?*

We looked through the monitor at Aidy, and somehow she turned to look directly at us.

“Rokuko. I will now be invading your dungeon. Sharpen your blade in wait for me, if you will. Ahahaha!” she said with a high-pitched laugh.

“Keima, what happened to Aidy? Something’s definitely off here.”

“Er, yeah. I have no idea. It feels like something’s brainwashing her, though.”

“Brainwashing? Aidy...? That’s hard to imagine, but I guess it couldn’t be anything else. Not even Aidy would just try to kill me out of nowhere... Okay, maybe she would, but not like that.”

We were lucky that the Divine Quilt had protected her, but one wrong move and Rokuko would have died then and there. Either way, we needed to do something about Aidy. Problem was, we couldn’t contact Misha for some reason. What a useless cat.

“Well, for now, we’ve gotta stop her.”

Aidy left the chief residence and headed to the dungeon. Luckily it

was nighttime, and most adventurers had already left. It probably wouldn't help too much, but I sent all the Goblins in the dungeon to go stall Aidy.

I sent my instructions to the fairy managing the dungeon—Rei's subordinate.

"Elka. Are any adventurers left?"

"Yes, Master, but only those sleeping in the fourth floor's Inn of Greed. They shouldn't be a problem."

I had thought there would be a few on the second and third floors, the labyrinth, but apparently anyone who stayed in the dungeon this late just went to the Inn of Greed to sleep. That was pretty efficient, and convenient, for us.

"Stall Aidy in the labyrinth area. Make her walk around to buy us some time."

"Understood," Elka said, splitting into multiple copies of herself and starting to work in multiple places at once.

"Rokuko, contact Niku and Rei's group. Tell them it's an emergency."

"Sure, Keima."

I took Ichika out of {Storage}.

"Yooo—Wait, why the Master Room?"

"Ichika, it's an emergency."

"Mm? An emergency, huh? What happened?" Ichika asked, straightening her back at once upon emerging in the Master Room instead of the inn or chief residence like she had expected. She also took off her mask and put it into {Storage}.

"Have a look."

I made my monitor visible and showed Aidy slaughtering Goblins while cackling like a lunatic.

"Whoa, momma."

"Yep. Aidy's probably being controlled by someone or something. And right now, she's in the middle of conquering the dungeon. Use some Golems to hold her back. Once Niku and Rei's group gets here, lead them in the battle."

"Whew, this is some serious junk, huh? You got it," she replied, and seconds later the three monster girls arrived at the Master Room.

"Master, I have arrived at your summons!" Rei declared.

"Alright. Just follow Ichika's instructions," I said, leaving it up to her to get Rei and the others up to speed.

"Master... Nzz, good morning..." Niku said, arriving a second later and looking sleepy. She had probably been asleep... I felt worse about that than anyone, but it was an emergency. Niku needed to follow Ichika's instructions and fight Aidy with Golems.

Alright. Next step.

“Rokuko, mail Haku and get her advice. She might be able to get Misha to come over too.”

“Wait, Keima. Wouldn’t that be like... telling Haku to kill Aidy?”

“Yeah, she might take it like that.”

Rokuko looked down. “I don’t want that.”

“I feel you, but if we don’t get her help, we might not be able to stop Aidy at all.”

“I’m not doing it! Aidy’s my friend! Are you telling me to kill my friend with my own dungeon?!” Rokuko shouted, her voice heavy with sadness. I averted my gaze. “We’re fixing this without Haku’s help. Okay, Keima?”

“I mean... Couldn’t you get Haku under control somehow?”

“This is my safety we’re talking about here, not my love life. Surely you know she’ll do absolutely anything to protect me.”

It was true. If Haku learned about this incident, she would view Aidy as an enemy and probably kill her. The Demon Realm and Demon King faction cores were her enemies to begin with, so I doubted Haku would hesitate much.

In other words, she would likely bust out all the stops to kill Aidy by any means possible. After all, Aidy had already swung her sword at Rokuko. She would be as good as dead in Haku’s eyes, and if we wanted to keep things the way they were we couldn’t tell her about this. We needed to settle this in secret without relying on outside help.

“Keima. Do you have any ideas?”

I thought things over at Rokuko’s prompting. Things would have been a lot easier with the Divine Alarm Clock, but in any case... I looked at the monitor and saw Aidy destroy the Golems controlled by Ichika’s squad with a smile, then start fighting the especially swift-looking Iron Golem controlled by Niku. That was buying some time, but if Aidy felt like it she could beeline to the bottom floor whenever she felt like it.

“Hm?”

I noticed some kind of black mist floating around Aidy’s body.

“Huh... I feel like I’ve seen that black mist before.”

I searched my memories. Right, right...

“Dungeon Eaters, Core 564’s left arm, and finally, the artificial dungeon.”

Three things. Each of those three things had been all black and misty just like what was surrounding Aidy. If we assumed this was another similar case, all we had to do was think about how we had solved those prior problems. And what had we done? Easy. We’d murdered the shit out of them. Er... Well, all except one.

“For Core 564, we had the help of Father—the Darkness God.”

Right. That too had been a rampage beyond our control, so in

many ways it was the closest to Aidy's current predicament.

I opened the menu and found the GP section, where I swiftly offered up 1 GP to give a request to Father. *Your daughter has lost control; is there any way to save her without killing her? Without telling Haku about this.* I could have sent a normal mail to him, but offering up some GP was a sign of my good faith. Which must have been a good idea, because I got a reply immediately.

Do you see the black brooch on Aidy's chest? You can save her by destroying the pearl-thing inside of it. They haven't fused together yet, so it's not my place to interfere. I'll take the GP as a fee for the information and my silence. P.S. Aidy's holding the mist back somewhat through sheer force of will, so if you appeal to her desires a bit, it should be harder for the black mist to control her.

That was some good info, and it seemed it would be easier to settle all this than expected. However, given that he said they hadn't fused together yet, they probably would once Aidy's force of will wore down. The faster we acted, the better.

"Rokuko, I've found the solution. We need to appeal to Aidy's mind on the inside and destroy the black brooch on her chest."

"Got it! So that brooch is at fault, huh. Niku, Ichika, target it!"

"You got it, boss! C'mon, Niku! Time for some teamwork!"

"Understood, Ichika. I'll match your movements."

The Iron Golems on the other side of the monitor attacked Aidy with almost unbelievable speed. They ran along the walls, kicked off the ceiling, and attacked from multiple angles at once in ways no normal adventurer would be able to react to in time. When had they gotten so masterful at controlling monsters, seriously?

But unfortunately, that wasn't enough to beat Aidy. All it took was a few forceful swings of her Magic Blade, and the golems ended up as piles of rubble behind her.

"Overwhelm her with numbers! Keima, recover the Golem fragments and rebuild them! Rei and Kinue, charge forward with the newly spawned Iron Golems! Neruneh, assist Niku and Ichika with the Golems that Keima rebuilds! Elka, keep on manipulating the labyrinth!" Rokuko shouted, launching out instructions.

Man, those were some precise instructions. As her Dungeon Master I couldn't help but be surprised by just how much she had grown. I got right to work using {Create Golem} on rubble as instructed to rebuild the Golems.

Wait, geez, there's so much!

Every time Aidy destroyed a Golem the resulting rubble was sent right here. I fixed them, sent them back, and then they returned as rubble. Fix, send, return. I felt like a living Golem Production Factory. Like, seriously.

“I could do better if only I could possess the monsters... I’m sorry,” Niku said sadly.

“Nah, nah, nah, miss me with that crap. I don’t wanna experience dying over and over,” Ichika said with a rapid shake of her head. Neither of them could use the possession function since they weren’t dungeon monsters. However, my Golems were homemade and thus could not be possessed. Controlling them manually was the most one could do.

“I will send some Stone Golems as well! Knock her off balance with tackles!” Rei instructed, sending forth Stone Golems and Clay Golems in a suicidal charge, but Aidy just easily sidestepped out of the way and cut them down as they ran past her. We hardly even bought time. The mountain of Golem rubble for me to fix was only getting larger.

At first there were five Golems’ worth, then ten, then twenty. It would only be a matter of time before I simply couldn’t keep up... Or so I thought, but eventually the flow of Golem rubble got bottlenecked.

“Ngh...! The passages are too small to send any more at once!” Rei said through gritted teeth. Okay, that made sense. The physical space available in the halls prevented the Golems from dying any faster than they already were. “Elka, can you do anything about this?!”

“No, if I send her someplace more Golems can attack at once, I won’t be able to make her wander the labyrinth any longer!”

At the moment, our most effective way of buying time was simply moving the walls in the labyrinth to make her walk in circles. Increasing the number of Golems we launched at her wouldn’t necessarily be enough to break the brooch, and given how effortlessly Aidy was handling them now, we needed to send a lot more than a few extra to make a difference.

“Hey, Rokuko. This is never going to be enough.”

Rokuko was busy too with registering the fixed Golems and placing them in the labyrinth, but we were making zero progress here. She had to understand that.

“I know! I know, but what else can we do?! We need to stop Aidy!”

We were dealing with a Dungeon Core that was an expert at Demon King style, which required the user to know no exhaustion. I watched her fight while using {Create Golem}, and she was simply dancing between the waves of Golems and cutting them all down. Their rubble came right to me. At the very least, she slowed down a bit while fighting, and the labyrinth was drawing her down the path we wanted her to walk. We were buying some time.

However, buying time was not a winning strategy here. The

longer we took, the more likely it became that Aidy would fuse with the black mist too much for us to do anything about.

“Keima. Do you have any ideas?”

“Not much we can do but have Aidy fall for a trap. That said, she’s strong enough to match a Hero in power. A half-baked trap won’t do anything to her,” I replied, not pausing {Create Golem} for a second. Clay Golems were one thing, but only I could repair Iron Golems, our main fighting force here. *Man, this isn’t giving me much time to think about things.*

“She definitely is strong enough to duel on par with Wataru. So... I’ll think of a strategy to buy time that doesn’t involve using so many Golems, and then you can use that time to think of an actual winning strategy. Focus on the Golems until then, okay?”

“Can you manage that?”

“Who do you think I am, Keima? I’m your w-wi... I’m your wife!” she declared, her face bright red, but at the very least her confidence came across well.

“Though really, you buying me time to think doesn’t guarantee I’ll come up with any good ideas.”

“I believe in you, Keima.”

Sheesh. What choice do I have but to come up with a genius plot now? Uh... Sorry if I can’t.

Aidy’s Perspective

Aidy slashed her way through the unnaturally massive Golem ambush. That said, since she knew how dungeons operated, it wasn’t unnatural to her at all. From certain perspectives, this was essentially a Dungeon Battle between her and the [Cave of Greed]. It only made sense for waves of troops to be launched in Dungeon Battles.

“Ahahaha! Aaah, there’s no end to them!”

She swung her sword. Her strength never diminished. Her Dungeon Core body didn’t get tired, but even then the black brooch on her chest was pouring a constant stream of power into her.

Still, she was getting fairly bored of fighting Golems.

“I do not need to read minds to know what you are aiming for,” she said, slashing aside the Iron Golems leaping at her. All of their attacks were aimed directly at her chest.

“In any case. Who are *you*, really? What do you intend to do with my body?”

“———, ———! ———!”

The black pearl screamed incessantly. Aaah, she was getting all flushed again. *Dungeon, dungeon, deep, deeper! Bottom floor! Destroy the dungeon!*

“Ahahaha! If you insist, lend me more of your powe— Oh?”

Just as she was about to entrust herself a bit more to the pendant, the wave of attacks suddenly ceased. That was a bit of a mood killer, but in their place a single Iron Golem stepped forward, wielding a stone sword like a staff and staring at Aidy.

“...?” Aidy tilted her head, at a loss.

They faced each other for a bit, then the Golem slowly turned around and walked off with its back facing Aidy. It simply held its sword without readying it whatsoever. Aidy would be capable of cutting it down in a single slash if she so wished.

“Now, what to do about this?” Aidy muttered to herself without moving. The Golem turned its head and gestured her over, as if asking if she was refusing to follow. It seemed she was being invited somewhere.

“——! ——...!”

“Oh yes, oh certainly, this is a trap. No doubt whatsoever. However, I cannot ignore an invitation by the sword, can I?” Aidy asked and subsequently ignored the voice’s desperate wailing. After all, this was unmistakably an invitation from the dungeon... From Rokuko.

She followed the Golem’s guidance down the passageways. Aidy had planned to cut it down if it was simply buying time by circling around, but it headed straight to one of the greed traps—the trial rooms for Magic Blades. Upon confirming that she was inside, the Golem slid the Magic Blade out of the stand. The entrance closed as per the gimmick.

“Surely there is more to this than that, no?” Aidy held her sword out at the iron needles and waited, planning to destroy them if there was nothing more to this than the trap. And then... she jumped to the side to dodge a sudden attack from the ceiling.

“Aha! I see this doll has a bit more style!”

Before her was the Golem that Keima had once made to be the dungeon’s boss but now generally just patrolled the storage area—the Iron Haniwa Golem, riding an iron Golem horse and wearing a full set of warrior Golem armor.

“Testing, testing. Can you hear me, Aidy?”

“Oh? This is Rokuko’s voice...”

“This is a recording, so we can’t have a conversation, but anyway... This Golem once beat the Holy Kingdom’s High Priestess. Have fun; he should pose at least a little threat to you. I’ll open the doors if you win.”

“Oh my! I truly love you, Rokuko! I will crush you to itty bitty bits once I’m done!” Aidy exclaimed, gleefully readying her Magic Blade. Her heart thumped with excitement as she rushed at the Iron

Haniwa Golem to see just what techniques it would be showing her.

The Iron Haniwa Golem was a reasonably powerful foe. However, it was far beneath Aidy in strength.

“Stronger than the pup and weaker than Wataru, I suppose. That was fairly enjoyable. Had I been Sebas, it would have been a fairly good fight,” Aidy mused. The last trick it pulled had been especially surprising. No doubt Keima had come up with hiding a magic tool weapon inside the arm of a Golem. Luckily it was an attack made of water and sand, so Aidy was able to block it with her indestructible Magic Blade of fire. If all the Golems that had attacked her in the hallways had arms filled with those traps, Aidy might have been overwhelmed already, but it was likely not a weapon that could be mass produced.

“———!———!———! —!!!”

“Ngh... Goodness, you are selfish. Can I not have a little time to dwell in the aftertaste of battle...?”

The voice began wailing again; it hurt her head.

Upon confirming that Aidy had defeated the Iron Haniwa Golem, the Golem by the stand paused reluctantly for dramatic effect, then returned the sword to its stand. The door opened, and Aidy destroyed the Golem so it wouldn't shut the door while she was walking out. Though on second thought, she didn't have to do that, since Rokuko could shut it at will if she wanted to.

Aidy returned to the labyrinth.

“Aha! Now, deeper we go!”

“———!———!”

The black stone on her chest screeched out directions. It told her where to go, and Aidy obeyed without hesitation. It guided her safely out of the labyrinth, and she arrived at the familiar Inn of Greed. She remembered Keima guiding her there in the past. He hadn't taken her any farther, but the voice screamed for her to go farther inside.

Aidy didn't need rest, so she ignored both the Inn of Greed and the adventurers within it. Past it she found a large cave stretching downwards. It was cylindrical in shape overall, and a staircase hugged its walls downward. Keima and Rokuko had called this the spiral staircase area.

“Hm... It would hurt a bit to fall down this, I believe. Perhaps we should fall back and search for ano—”

“——!!! ——!!!! ——!!!”

“Ngggh...! So loud... Could you please not try to destroy my consciousness over a simple joke? I will proceed, just be quiet...”

Aidy advanced further. The voice quieted down.

The width of the steps was consistent along the staircase, meaning

that if one were to fall down the hole in the center they would fall all the way to the bottom without hitting any stairs. If they had something long like Aidy's Magic Blade, they could possibly latch onto the staircase with it, but otherwise they would be doomed to fall. Aidy was impressed by how devilish the design was.

She began climbing down the staircase step by step, only for her to suddenly feel herself floating in midair. Some of the steps had swung down toward the wall, creating a mobile pitfall.

"Oh my! Now this is interesting!"

It wasn't as bad as falling down the center, but it was still a whole loop of the staircase. Landing wrong would result in a sprained ankle or a broken bone. Aidy, however, swung her sword and used the inertia to pull herself up before falling. If Keima had been there, he would have muttered "What, you have a double jump?" Normally, an adventurer would need to carefully descend the staircase while checking each step for traps one by one, but thanks to this technique, Aidy could advance without worry. It was somewhat unfair that she could save herself with ease even after putting a whole foot through empty air.

However, after advancing a bit forward, the entire wall launched outwards. A normal adventurer would be knocked off the staircase into the center.

"I see. So this is how he pushes people into the center, hm?"

And to complete the pain, if one hurried forward to dodge the wall they would find the steps past it collapsed inward to create a pitfall. What a splendid combination! Aidy hummed to herself with glee as she skipped down the staircase.

"And the center ends on a mountain of spikes... Perhaps it would have been faster to just jump down the center after all," Aidy mused after having enjoyed her fill of climbing down the staircase as intended. From there, she decided to take a brief re—

"———! ——!"

"Ahahaha! Indeed! We have no time to rest! Eugh, bleeeh... Ah, how disgusting... Hahahaha!"

Aidy, wavering a bit on her feet, obeyed the voice and advanced farther. According to its sense of smell, the Core was yet still deeper. She opened the door to find a passageway paved with stone.

"Mm."

She advanced along, paying some mind to watch for any traps. She opened a door along the way just for fun and found swords decorating the walls.

"Oh my. These are the same Magic Blades as used in the greed traps."

In which case, it was likely some trap awaited if she grabbed the

sword. But she didn't want it anyway. Rather than going inside the room, she just advanced farther in accordance with the voice's directions. She looked inside the next room and the next one after that just to be sure, but they were all basically the same. The voice didn't protest that level of exploration much. It probably helped that she had justified it by saying it was important to check for monsters, just in case they tried launching a surprise attack.

"These are fairly bland rooms, hm? I wonder if humans view these as meaningful treasure stores. They are Magic Blades, at least. Not that I need them."

Aidy turned a corner, disinterested, and saw before her a chocolate cornet.

"Ah...!"

The chocolate cornet turned and ran away—Correction: there was a rat with a box on its back containing a chocolate cornet still in its plastic container, and *it* ran away. Aidy instinctively chased after it.

"———!!! ———!!!"

"Yes, yes, you can wait. The chocolate cornet comes first," Aidy said, ignoring the voice completely to chase after the rat.

"My my, where are you trying to go?"

She chased the rat. Down halls, around corners, and finally she caught another glimpse of the cornet. It was as if the cornet was begging to be caught.

"My. My, my, my. It would surely be rude of me to refuse such a request."

This was undoubtedly an invitation for Aidy, and just Aidy. No doubt Rokuko was behind this. How could she ever refuse such a blatant invitation?

"———!———!"

"Quit it. How will you repay me if I lose sight of it?" Aidy complained while chasing after the cornet. The voice smelled that progress was to the right, but she ignored it and went to the left. Why? Because the cornet was there.

"Oh my, oh my, do you truly think you can escape? Know your place, rat."

"———! —!!!"

"Ngh... Do not interfere. I am chasing the cornet right now. Do you think soldiers can fight without food? I can, but it's the thought that counts."

Aidy continued chasing the cornet while ignoring the sick feeling washing over her. She ran and ran until finally the cornet fell off the rat's back.

"At last, the chocolate cornet!" She opened the bag and took out the cornet. Nom nom nom.

“As expected, chocolate cornets remain the peak of culinary perfection. I do hope I can make them myself after returning to my home country.”

“———!———!———!” The voice thundered in her head.

“Ahahahaha! I know, I know. I will progress further. There is no time to waste!”

She had spent a bit too much time playing. Aidy stuffed the tip of the chocolate cornet into her mouth and once again aimed for the bottom of the dungeon.

Rokuko's Perspective

Aidy was walking through the storage area. She was heading in the direction of the puzzle area that had just been built recently, with the coliseum area being behind that. That led into the Boss Room, then the Core Room. She was fast approaching the bottom of the dungeon. The Core in the Core Room was a Dummy Core, but given her apparently supernatural sense of direction, she would likely find the hidden passage without any trouble at all.

“I was thinking of just sending her to Phenny's Playground, but... that wouldn't work.”

If she kept going that way and went into the Flame Caverns, she would leave our surveillance net. We didn't want other Cores to know about this if we were going to keep it a secret from Haku, and since Redra and Igny were out of commission we couldn't ask them for help either.

“Really though, Aidy's acting weird in more ways than one. She acts like she's talking to someone, then she bursts into laughter out of nowhere...”

Someone really was brainwashing her. Though it looked like she came back to her senses sometimes.

“Keima, I bought a lot of time. How are things on your end?” I asked while fleeing from Aidy with the cornet-carrying rat.

“Yeah. I came up with a pretty good idea. It's a bit of a gamble on everything working right, though.”

That was my Keima for you. *I mean, I'm the one who asked him to come up with something, but still. He actually managed it.*

“I'll ask just to be safe, but what's the plan?”

“I want to keep it simple and bury her. In other words, I want to repeat the ‘Cask of Amontillado’ strategy.”

The plan's codename was “Cask of Amontillado”—the same plan we once used on Suzuki the Hero, which involved burying someone alive by using the wall's repair function. You couldn't build walls when invaders were on the floor, but repairing walls was an

exception. We just had to exploit that.

“If Aidy’s as dangerous as a Hero, then we just need to use a strategy that works on a Hero. Though I can say for sure that Aidy’s way more dangerous than Suzuki was.”

“Absolutely.”

As a Dungeon Core, Aidy didn’t need to breathe or eat. Burying her wouldn’t kill her.

“There’s just one problem,” Keima continued. “If we bury her whole, the mist might have taken her over completely by the time we can dig her out. We need to think of some solution for that.”

“I guess we just need to get her to stand in the exact place, huh?”

“Yep. And that’s where you come in, Rokuko.”

“Uh-huh. This is all happening because I wanted to keep it a secret, so I’ll do whatever I need to do. Want to hold onto the Divine Quilt?”

“Nah, save that. I want to cover your Core with it as an absolute last resort. That would probably cause some functions to shut down since conquering the dungeon would be impossible, but better than dying. Anyway, it’ll take some time to dig out the wall. Try to buy a bit more time for me.”

“I’ll do what I can. Just use the time I give you well.”

“Alright, send me to the Boss Room. How much time do you think you can buy?”

“There’s the puzzle area, but I’m not s— Ah!”

Ideally the puzzle gates would have bought a bit of time, but in reality Aidy just smashed through them with her ultimate attack, {Crimson Road}. That said... She had done something similar in the past, so I hadn’t really hoped for it to stop her for long. The Golem-made gates were just a bad match with Aidy since all it took to beat them was overwhelming strength. Though on the other hand, since she could only use {Crimson Road} once a day, they had done a good job in forcing her to waste her trump card.

“I’ll have Rei and the others buy time. You can use Niku and Ichika to help you with the trap. Go as fast as you can.”

“Roger.”

I sent Keima, Niku, and Ichika to the boss room, then turned to those who remained.

“Rei, Kinue, Neruneh... It’s our time to shine.”

“Understood,” Rei replied as the leader of the group. “I shall even use my own self as a shield to buy time.”

“Just hold her off until Keima’s finished his preparations. Try not to die, if you can.”

“As you wish,” Rei replied, and I placed the three of them in the coliseum.

Two things were coming together here: Rei, and the coliseum. Aidy had lost to the “Vampire” that Rei and the others had pretended to be in this same coliseum earlier. No doubt their presence would stimulate Aidy big-time, and buy plenty of time... Probably. Hopefully.

“If this doesn’t buy Keima enough time, the only thing I’d have left to appeal to Aidy is... Myself, I guess?” I murmured, then readied the monitor so I could inform Keima the second that Rei and the others lost.

Aidy’s Perspective

“Goodness, I am a genius. That deserves some praise, if I do say so myself.”

“____, ____.”

“Yes, yes. If only you would play nice and give me the praise I deserve, I would have nothing to complain about.”

Aidy was playing it very cool in front of the puzzle gate. She had read the puzzle, failed to understand it, concluded the gate was intended to be destroyed rather than solved, and then did exactly that. She certainly had *not* been lashing out with annoyance because the voice in her head mocked her for getting the answer wrong.

After all, there was no problem with this method. She burned the area down to a crisp and made it passable. She had to unleash her {Crimson Road} skill, which could only be used once a day, but there was no problem with that at all. The voice only told her to go farther into the dungeon; it never told her to tactically conserve her strength.

In any case, the puzzle gate was demolished and the path opened. Aidy advanced.

The hall opened up into a large cavern, and seeing what lay ahead made Aidy want to jump forward. It was a very familiar room, and naturally, one that would contain obstacles to her goal.

She passed through the gate; as expected, it was the same place that had presented her with such a challenging battle in the past. And to top things off, in front of her was the person she had wanted to see more than anyone else.

“Aaah, my Vampire friend! How I have longed to see you, ahaha!”

“Welcome, Aidy. I shall take care of you now,” Rei said, then shook her head. “Excuse me, let me word that better. You shall go no farther... I, Rei, will protect this dungeon!”

“Ah...! ‘A Named Vampire, I see. This could be fun... Now, let us dance!’” Aidy exclaimed, instantly picking up Rei’s intentions. They both said the same lines they had said when they’d first met each other here. Aidy was happy that they both remembered the encounter so well.

Rei swung her right arm, and several orbs of fire appeared in the air. That was similarly a recreation of the previous duel. Although Aidy was in her human form, she played along while ignoring the voice wailing at her to charge farther into the dungeon. The fireballs behaved differently from last time, however; their arcs were more complex. Some launched straight at her, some curved, some spun, and of course, some were tracking missiles that would follow her every movement.

However, Aidy made no effort to dodge them. Why? Because she felt no killing intent within them. In other words, she thought they were an illusion—keyword being *thought*. Once they got close, she felt their heat, and swiped them away with her Magic Blade of fire.

“Oh? It will hardly be a recreation if you don’t avoid them.”

“Ahaha, those were real fire balls this time, no? Did you learn this from Rokuko’s master?”

“Indeed, as my Master is an excellent mage. Aaah, what a shame. Now you know that I have become truly strong.”

The attacks had lacked killing intent, but that was because she hadn’t expected fire to work on Aidy in the first place. On top of that, Aidy hadn’t heard any incantation. Had she learned that from Keima as well?

Good grief. Only three weeks had passed since they’d returned from Demon Realm, and she had already mastered incantation-less magic? What a superb pair of teacher and student they were.

“Ice was next, I believe?”

“Correct... Though I would like most for you to simply leave the dungeon now, Aidy.”

“That is not an option. I must destroy dungeons, you see.”

Rei floated up into the air, and Aidy swung her Magic Blade to point its tip up at her.

“I must protect my home, then.”

“Aaah, so lovely. Oh how I wish to kill you.”

“I must say I fail to understand how Demon Realm people think...!” Rei exclaimed, holding her hand out toward Aidy and launching chunks of ice at her. They flew straighter than the fireballs and were faster as well. And most importantly, these actually had killing intent. Aidy ducked to dodge the first of them, then used her momentum to leap forward and launch a thrust at Rei.

“Got you...! Or not.”

However, Aidy’s Magic Blade passed through Rei’s body without leaving a scratch. She disappeared, then reappeared some distance away.

“Ahaha. To think there exists a Vampire that could survive being hit by a flame Magic Blade. How lovely.”

“I thought I was dead for a moment, to be honest. Could you hold back a little?”

“Perish the thought. I lost to you last time, Rei, but this time I will win.”

“I’m afraid you’ll be losing again,” Rei replied, launching more ice chunks as she spoke. Aidy dodged and smacked some away with her hands. She threw her Magic Blade at Rei only for a portion of Rei’s body to turn to mist and let the sword pass through her before continuing to attack as if nothing had happened. Aidy’s Magic Blade vanished, then reappeared in her hands.

“Aaah, Rei, you are truly something else.”

“Incidentally, I just remembered, but our first fight wasn’t even a one-on-one duel.”

“Oh, was it not?”

“Remember the Gargoyles?”

“I didn’t even see them. Pay that no mind.”

To Aidy, or rather, to most Demon Realm residents, summoned monsters that could be killed in a single blow were no different from simple obstacles. What mattered was who they were fighting, not rubble in the arena.

Rei’s attacks varied between having killing intent and not. That was probably an indication that she was mixing magical attacks with her illusion skills, all on top of turning herself to mist as well. *Ah, what a lovely Vampire who so bewitchingly entices me to murder her.*

“Good grief; none of my attacks are hitting. Perhaps I should have made my first attack a serious one.”

“Indeed. The first attack was the only one I let my guard down for. That said, you have truly grown stronger, Rei.”

“I am still weaker than Niku, though...”

“Perhaps you are simply poorly matched for her... Still, how exactly has that pup ever beaten you?” Aidy asked with a tilt of her head. “Aaah... I seem to recall Empire culture having something about respecting those who joined an organization before you. Could you not beat her if you fought seriously, Rei?”

“Who can say?”

Aidy concluded that Rei would only lose to Niku under normal circumstances. That made sense, given that she couldn’t use those skills of hers in public.

“I suppose it’s about time I used *that*.”

“That?”

Rei snapped her fingers. A black ball appeared in the air, growing up to ten meters in diameter. It was pitch-black and allowed no light to pass through it, so much so it looked entirely like a flat circle floating in the air. It was the spell Rei had used to finish the last battle

—and it was an illusion.

“Oh my! What was this called again? The stig, ah... The stig orb of darkness?”

“It is the {Stygian Sun}.”

“Ah, yes. Of course. I never forgot for a moment,” Aidy said with a giggle. The black orb wavered like the sun itself, and Aidy waited without even readying her sword. “If you think this is an illusion, well, let it hit you! My magic will rip apart your black armor and adorn it with blood! ...Although, you are not wearing armor right now!”

“Indeed I am not, but... ‘Will it now? Your threat is as empty as a child scarecrow’s.’”

“You will regret your arrogance in the afterlife... {Stygian Sun}!”

Rei launched the black orb while re-enacting the scene from their memories. Aidy didn’t dodge it. She was certain the black sun was just an illusion. It had no killing intent, and most importantly, Aidy’s pride would not allow her to dodge it. No matter how loudly the voice screamed, she squashed it down.

“Aaah. And here it is...!” Aidy shut her eyes, honing her senses. “You did expect me to prepare for this, yes...?”

Indeed. Aidy had already formulated a counter to it. Or really, she had finished her preparations already by the time she invaded Core 564’s dungeon with Keima. To be specific, she obtained a way to see even when in pure darkness.

By honing her senses, she determined that indeed the ball was nothing more than a deceptive orb of darkness. However, she could not detect Rei, and so she tilted her head in confusion.

“Oh...? She... disappeared?” Aidy spun her head around, but Rei seemed to have left the coliseum entirely. “Aaah... I suppose she might have turned to mist.”

There was no other conclusion she could come to. In their last duel that move had concluded their duel, but the same would not be true this time. Aidy... simply saw right through the darkness. And so, she waited for Rei to reappear.

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“...Nothing?” Aidy tilted her head. Despite leaving herself blatantly open to attack, Rei was not approaching her at all.

“Do not tell me she would simply... No, of course not.” Aidy sighed at Rei having disappeared just as things were getting good. The voice was pounding her head to go farther into the dungeon. It was honestly irritating. Oh well. She gave up and reluctantly advanced, at which point...

“Rokuko?”

The sight of her made the voice fall silent in an instant.

“You stood in place so long I thought you had just given up,” Rokuko said, standing at the exit to the coliseum. The voice screamed at Aidy to attack. It understood well that Rokuko was the Dungeon Core. Naturally, since that was why Aidy had attacked her back at the chief residence.

“Oh, and Aidy? I took Rei away and told her to stop,” she continued, and the heat drained from Aidy’s face.

“Why? Things were just getting oh so fun.”

“Why do you think?” Rokuko began. Aidy took out her Magic Blade—the moment she finished her sentence, she would obey the voice and kill her. “Because you’re my prey, Aidy. Now... shall we duel?”

Aidy used her left arm to hold back her right arm, which had launched an attack. She looked at Rokuko. Both her senses and the voice’s nose told her that this was the real Rokuko. She was no illusion.

“Oh? You? And I? A duel!”

“Yes, a duel, between you and I.”

Aidy’s disappointment flipped right into soaring excitement. A duel with her true friend! That was all Aidy had ever wanted. And to think that Rokuko would challenge her to one herself! How could Aidy ever deny such mutual love?

“That’s why I had Rei stand aside. You understand, right?”

“Ahaha, goodness, Rokuko. Were you jealous of me, your arch enemy, being killed by another? How lovely. I’ll forgive you. Aaah, how lovely.”

Aidy couldn’t help but revel in the bliss. She had lost to Rei before, after all. She wouldn’t have emerged unscathed if Rei had some other attack like the one which had settled the duel before. It only made sense Rokuko would be worried about her dueling partner being worn down. Everything fit into Demon Realm culture, and Aidy was delighted.

This was almost equivalent to the classic Demon Realm story where the protagonist would be saved by their friend, who would say “Don’t die before I kill you myself!” and then duel them to the death. Core 219 hadn’t been fond of it, but Rokuko remembered it. How romantic!

“Aaah, I am truly, truly happy. I will give this my all.”

“Just to be clear, I don’t intend to kill you or be killed myself. Would you mind holding back a little?”

“I would never dream of it,” Aidy replied. After all, she was here specifically to destroy the dungeon.

“Well, be gentle.” Rokuko looked a bit sad about that, but it was

probably just Aidy's imagination. "Incidentally, Aidy. Would you mind taking off that brooch? It's kind of gross to look at."

"Oh, this? It doesn't come off. Very gross, I know." Aidy giggled, to which Rokuko let out a sigh. Of course it wouldn't be that simple. "Now then, step into the coliseum and we can—"

"You know, Aidy. I have an idea."

"What is it, Rokuko?"

"The Boss Room is right past this point."

"The Boss Room..."

"Right. Don't you think it would be the perfect place for us dungeons to duel?"

Aidy felt her heart throb. Reason being, the Boss Room was the last line of defense for dungeons—no matter what happened or how hard they struggled, it was where the final battle took place, the climax of all climaxes. Coliseums were quite a dating hotspot, but that was for normal people in the Demon Realm. What about Dungeon Cores?

"The Boss Room is the best place for us to settle this, no?"

"I have never agreed more!" Aidy rejoiced and agreed with Rokuko's suggestion.

The two of them headed to the Boss Room. Soon, they reached a large, thick door, ornately carved just like Boss Room doors should be.

"Now, I'll be going in first, and I want you to wait one minute before following me."

"Oh? But I am ready to duel at once."

Rokuko cracked the boss door open and slid inside. Aidy tried to do the same, but was stopped by a palm.

"What are you talking about? This is the Dungeon Boss Room, remember. You want us to hold hands and walk in all buddy buddy? Talk about a total buzzkill."

"Aaah! Precisely, Rokuko! Forgive me, I was a fool." Aidy stomped down her impatience and the screaming voice to patiently, ever so patiently wait in front of the door as instructed.

"There we go. And don't just burst through the door and charge me, okay? I want us to face each other down carefully before we duel. Keima says that's the style in his world."

"That sounds quite lovely!" Aidy vigorously nodded in approval. And thus, she let Rokuko close the door, then waited for a full minute. She swung her Magic Blade, calmed her heart with fantasies, double-checked her Demon King style posture, and then, after exactly sixty seconds had passed, faced the door. The voice had remained silent since she was preparing for the battle that awaited. She opened her menu to make sure that she wasn't going in even a second early. Onwards, to the heart-throbbing duel!

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Behind the door was an incredibly small room, considering the size of the door. In dungeon terms, it was about the size of a Small Room (200 DP) with rocks jutting out of the floors and walls. Rokuko was standing on the other end of the room, guarding the exit.

“Rokuko...?”

“Yes, Aidy?”

Aidy faced Rokuko, then continued. “This room seems exceptionally cramped. Why is it so cramped, I wonder?”

“That will make it harder for you to swing your sword, no?”

That makes sense, Aidy thought. It certainly was traditional for a Boss Room to be designed to give the boss an advantage.

“Rokuko?”

“Yes, Aidy?”

Second question.

“What are those two lines beneath your feet?”

“We stand on these lines, then bow at each other. This is apparently how it works in Keima’s world.”

That makes sense, Aidy thought, watching Rokuko press her arms against her sides before bowing. She had seen in books that doing so was a traditional greeting in Keima’s world.

At last, they faced each other. Aidy bowed, and...

“Pardon me, Rokuko.”

“Yes, Aidy?”

“Why is my body embedded in a wall?”

“Hah, well, that’d be because you got caught in a dungeon trap. It’s that simple,” Rokuko said, grinning with a smile that looked just like her Master’s while taking out a metal hammer and chisel.

Keima’s Perspective

I looked at Aidy, still transformed to look like Rokuko. Aidy had been buried in the wall the second she bowed; or, to be more accurate, her lower half was buried while her upper half stuck outside it.

“I planned to dig your chest out if it got stuck too, but hey, looks like everything worked out.”

Making minor adjustments to the wall’s positioning with Ichika’s help had paid off, with her arms and most everything beneath her chest getting stuck. She looked entirely like a deer hunting trophy. You know, where like, their necks sprout out of a wooden shield thing.

“Rokuko? No, wait, you are her Master, no?”

“Of course I am. What, you thought I’d ever risk sending Rokuko

to the front lines?"

"Now that you mention it, there would be little reason to send a Core out before the Master."

Obviously. If Rokuko died, I would die too. That was a lot of risk for no gain.

"Consider me surprised. You look exactly like her."

"This is a Hero skill I'm using, so yeah."

Although borrowed, Hero skills were powers directly from a god. It only made sense they would trick Cores too.

Aidy glared at me with narrowed eyes. "How cruel... I was so happy to hear that Rokuko wished to duel me."

"Too bad. Anyway, you lost, so pipe down. I'm going to destroy that brooch."

"Why do you think I have lost?"

"I mean, come on. You challenged a dungeon, and now you're stuck. That means you lost the duel with our dungeon, right? And our dungeon is Rokuko. Thus, you lost a duel to her. Am I wrong?"

"Hrm..."

My sophistry left Aidy at a loss for words. She shut her eyes. She probably did feel like she had lost to Rokuko now, especially since I still looked like her.

"Was withdrawing Rei at that critical moment part of your plan?"

"Yeah, I figured you'd never be able to turn down Rokuko's duel after getting blue-balled like that." It was a bit coincidental that Rei had used her {Stygian Sun} right as I'd finished my preparations and she didn't need to buy any more time, but, well, history was written by the winners.

"What would you have done if this didn't work?"

"What's the point in me telling you that now?"

"I suppose you're right. It would be faster to just see for myself," Aidy said. She opened her eyes, revealing that the whites of her eyes had turned completely black, with the crimson of her eyes gleaming menacingly among the darkness. "Did you think mere stone walls would be capable of containing me?"



Cracks formed in the wall. *Oh shit.* I hurriedly placed the chisel against the brooch on Aidy's chest to break it, and...

"Hmph!"

Aidy knocked it aside by just swinging her chest. A moment later, the wall collapsed.

"Rokuko, hurry and fix the walls! Get me stuck if you have to!"

"Ahahaha! You're too late!"

Rokuko repaired the walls that filled the room, but before she could finish, Aidy had leapt back into the hallway. *Crap, she got away.* I ended up stuck in the walls, but Rokuko withdrew me instantly.

"Seems like she got out. This is... pretty bad, right?" she asked.

"Yup. It's pretty bad."

Judging by those eyes, she might have gotten too corrupted for us to do anything about. Our only option was to offer up more GP and ask—*Oh, a mail.* "She's still fine," huh? Really, Father? I'm going to trust you here. I mean, I guess I have no choice, but yeah.

"Still, to think not even burying her in a wall would be enough to stop her. Aidy's actually way stronger than Suzuki."

"Want to use the Divine Quilt this time?"

"Nah, like I said, we want that for our last line of defense." Even the Dungeon shutting down due to being unconquerable was better than outright dying.

"Rokuko, send me to the Boss Room."

"Will you be okay...?"

"I'll manage."

To be honest, I had basically no plan, but what else could I do? I took off the Divine Pajamas—which I had changed to look like Rokuko's clothes—and put on my normal Jersey. I simultaneously canceled my {Ultra Transformation}.

"Keima?"

"Hm? Nmm!"

Suddenly, soft lips were pressed against mine in a kiss. After a moment, Rokuko pulled away.

"I'm counting on you."

"R-Right..."

Why now, of all times? Or well, I guess now is actually the best time for that, all things considered.

I looked away from Rokuko in embarrassment and had her send me to the Boss Room while I felt my face heat up. I was probably blushing as badly as she was.

I redid my {Ultra Transformation} into myself and found Aidy waiting in the Boss Room, black-eyed and Magic Blade in hand.

"Aha! There you are, Rokuko's Master. Hm...? Your face is red."

“There are some adult circumstances. Let’s just pretend you didn’t see anything. Actually, I’d appreciate you waiting a second for me to calm down.”

“Very well, I suppose.”

She waited for me to calm down out of the kindness of her heart. Though in the first place, she was apparently waiting here for us to do something anyway.

“That was a fairly unremarkable door, but I suppose this is the proper Boss Room?”

“Yeah. There’s a bit of rubble scattered around, but don’t sweat it. We just moved rock from that other room here to hide it.”

This Boss Room was pretty big to fit the Dragon Golem, and the door was only small since we swapped the door with the crappy little room’s door. Incidentally, the Dai-Frame Ichika had used to move the rubble was still just sitting in the corner.

“I just recalled your date invitation from a moment ago. This is the Boss Room, which makes this our final battle, no? Our ultimate duel?”

“It sure does.”

“In that case, this is a duel between Rokuko and I. You said so yourself a moment ago, no?”

“Yeah, pretty much,” I replied while climbing into the Dai-Frame. “Let’s do it. Time for the boss fight.”

“You are the boss of the dungeon, Rokuko’s Master?”

“Not normally, but, well... Today’s special. Though naturally...” Five Iron Golems, controlled by Niku and the others, dropped from holes in the ceiling and landed on the ground with a thump. The gimmick of this Boss Room was the endless flow of monsters coming from the spawn rooms up there. “I’ll be using some adds. You don’t mind, right?”

“Aha! Of course, this is a boss fight!”

And so the boss fight began.

Aidy’s Perspective

Keima got into the Dai-Frame—one of the devices he had created himself while in the Demon Realm. However, this one looked different. There were many design and color differences. In particular, the material seemed to be fearsome orichalcum.

“Ahaha. Where did you get so much of that?”

“Cool, isn’t it? Come at me.” Keima gestured her over from within the Dai-Frame, and at the same time the Dai-Frame gestured as well. There was no time gap between the movements—it was clearly on an entirely different level from the ones he had made with the dwarves

back in the Demon Realm.

That said, it was still just a frame with plenty of empty space inside. Even if it did provide some armor, it limited sweep attacks, not thrusts.

As Aidy analyzed the Dai-Frame's weakness, Keima made his move. "If you aren't coming, I will," he said, then grabbed one of the nearby Iron Golems and threw it at Aidy.

"Ah!"

Aidy instantly kicked the ground and leapt to the side to dodge the rocket-like Golem projectile. The Golem reached out a hand to grab her, so she twisted in the air to dodge. It smashed into a wall and went limp in the middle of the hole it made.

"Not enough for you?" Keima swung his arms, which served as launching boards for more Iron Golems rushing her way. Aidy sliced open a path with her Magic Blade, only for more replacement Golems to rain down. They were working in organized unison, despite being spawned monsters. And despite being spawned monsters, whoever was controlling them was skilled.

"Here, there's more where that came from." Keima grabbed some rubble and threw it at Aidy like it was sand. Naturally, the Iron Golems leaped off his arms as he did so. The Iron Golems themselves were barely worthy of note, since she could cut through them with a single slash, but when thrown directly they posed a deadly threat.

"Only if they hit me, however...!"

"{Element Shot}."

A beam of light shot directly at Aidy to cut through her. She guarded in an instant with mana, but it was a heavy enough blow to make even her arms numb. If she lowered her guard for even a second, it would bore a hole through her.

"Ahahaha! Excellent, Rokuko's Master! This is fantastic!"

"Core 50 didn't train me for nothing, hah. Get ready to lose an arm or leg or two."

"I would be willing to lose five or six to you."

"How many limbs do you have...? Oh, you mean those Magic Blades."

Aidy's true body was a Magic Blade, and the one she was wielding was just a representation of it, in a sense. It had the exact same powers as her true body, but it wasn't the same thing. The sword breaking wouldn't be any sweat off her back, aside from the mana loss... and the fact that the copy breaking meant the attack was strong enough to break her real self too. That would be some pretty intense psychic damage for a Magic Blade-type Dungeon Core.

"Absolutely, absolutely splendid. Your Dai-Frame is full of openings, yet remains impenetrable. It is the perfect equipment for

you. Ah... And that is why you taught its secrets to Core 50?"

"Yep, exactly. This is a popular weapon in the Demon Realm, so there's nothing unfair about me using it!"

"Nobody would complain even if only you used them, you know. If anyone complained, all you would need to do is crush them... Like this!" Aidy dodged the Golems' blows and closed in on Keima once again. This time, she swung her sword.

"A slash? That's not gonna get through orichalcum—" The Magic Blade passed right through the Dai-Frame's arm.

Demon King style had a technique called Ghosting. She made her copy Magic Blade disappear mid-swing, then reappear once it passed through her opponent's defenses.

"Got you... Wait!"

However, right before the blade hit Keima, it passed through empty air and simply hit the inside of the Dai-Frame.

"Whoa! That scared me, but it's not gonna work either!"

"Ah! I see, yes, I see!"

Aidy dodged backwards to avoid the Dai-Frame's fist and instantly understood what had happened. In short, Keima... Or rather, Rokuko had done the same thing Aidy just had. She certainly had shown Rokuko other techniques at a prior Dungeon Battle, so it made sense she would be prepared.

"Despite being the Dungeon Boss, you withdrew him into the Master Room and then placed him back all in the span of a second to dodge the attack? Aha! Ahahahahahaha! Aaah... AAAAAAAAAAH! I LOVE YOU, ROKUKOOOOOOOO!"

What a splendid technique. Aidy let out a scream of pure joy after realizing she was fighting not just Keima, but Rokuko as well. Power flowed through her. More, more! Who cared that her arms had turned pitch black from her fingertips to her elbows?! She drew forth even more power from the black pearl.

If they were using Ghosting for defense, she would be unable to hurt Keima. She would be stuck on the defensive forever. Thus, she worked her head as much as possible while dodging the storm of Golems. Keima's attacks were generally long-ranged. He either threw Golems or used magic. However, Aidy was skilled enough that once she grew used to his strategy, it wasn't particularly difficult to dodge them all. Everything that missed simply destroyed the walls.

Did that mean neither of them could land the final blow? No. Aidy knew Ghosting's weak point more than anyone else, as one who used it often. You could not reappear something where there was already an object. As a Dungeon Core, Aidy knew that was the same for the dungeon's placing function.

In which case, if she left the sword stuck into the seat where

Keima was, he couldn't be placed back.

"It will not finish you off... but the boss leaving the Boss Room will be MY VICTOOOORY!" Aidy roared, then charged through the Golem projectiles to Keima again.

"Ngh, gah...!"

"It won't, hit!"

Keima threw chunks of the wall along with the Golems. He was pushed back bit by bit, until eventually he hit a wall. Speed wouldn't help him here. "Crap...!"

"It's over!" Aidy leapt onto the Dai-Frame and stabbed the sword at Keima. He disappeared. "I wi—"

An instant later. Aidy was pushed into the now-empty cockpit, grabbed, and turned around. Then...

"Wh—"

Before she could even figure out what was going on, her lower half was stuck in a wall again.

"Ngh!"

And this time, the Dai-Frame was holding her down so she couldn't escape.

"Aaah..."

"So, Aidy. How's the water... Or rather, the wall?"

"...A bit chilly, but not bad in the least."

Before her stood Keima, boasting a grin.

Keima's Perspective

"So, Aidy. How's the water... Or rather, the wall?"

"...A bit chilly, but not bad in the least." Aidy tried wiggling, but this time the stone wall wasn't the only thing here. The Dai-Frame's orichalcum-coated arms were holding her in place as well.

Whew. If this hadn't worked out, I really would have had to give up.

"Can't break it this time, huh?"

"Ngh... Ngh! It seems not."

It was Operation Cask of Amontillado, part 2. Instead of reinforced concrete walls I used reinforced orichalcum walls... okay, that wasn't exactly the right mental image. The arms were just coated with orichalcum, after all.

I went up and pressed the chisel against the black pearl on Aidy's brooch before she could pull any tricks. Thanks to Rei manipulating the Dai-Frame from afar and making precise adjustments, we had gotten it so far more of Aidy was stuck in the wall this time—everything but her face and chest was buried in the wall. The Dai-Frame was buried as well and put her pretty high up in the air, but not enough to cause any problems.

“Could you finish me off quickly? The voice’s dying screams are truly unbearable,” Aidy said with a sigh.

“We’ll see. I’m not the best at this, so...”

I swung down the hammer, like carving a statue out of granite. Like setting up a tent. Like driving a white stake into a vampire’s heart.

“This was a pleasant defeat. I suppose all the Golem throwing was to achieve this end.”

“Yup. Clever of you to notice.”

The second part of the strategy was pretty simple. Throwing them destroyed the walls, which created openings for the Dai-Frame to enter after grabbing onto Aidy. Incidentally, Rei had been controlling the Dai-Frame for the second half of the fight, and the “me” inside it had also been the creation of Rei’s illusion skills. All I had to do was have Rokuko place me on top of the illusion and shoot out some {Element Shots} at Aidy to break the walls. Though with all the Golems being thrown through walls, that didn’t really change much.

Halfway through the battle Aidy had cut through the illusion and we’d failed to grab her in time, but luckily she’d misunderstood what had happened. That had told us the strategy she would try next, and we’d managed to guide her into getting trapped.

From there, all Rokuko had had to do was repair the wall to bury her. Naturally, a lot of credit went to Niku, Ichika, Kinue, Neruneh, and Elka’s many copies, all of whom had helped control the Iron Golems.

After slamming the hammer down several times, the pearl finally started to crack. One more hit should do it. *This was a lot harder than I thought.*

“Incidentally, I have one last question.”

“What’s up?” I asked, pausing with the hammer held high in the air.

Aidy smiled with her pitch-black eyes. “Was my acting convincing? Did it seem like I was being controlled?”

I wish I hadn’t asked. Now I have to consider the possibility Aidy attacked us all on her own.

“Don’t ask questions that are hard to answer.”

“Oof.”

I swung the hammer down, and with a smash the black pearl shattered into bits. The shards turned gray, having lost their power, then blew away into the air like dust.

Epilogue

“Huuuh? Did something happen, meow?” Misha asked, sniffing me in my office.

“Yeah, Aidy went nuts and caused a lot of problems. We went and destroyed a criminal organization in Pavella. All these problems happened because you just wouldn’t fight Aidy for some reason.”

“Don’t try to push this on me, bub. My job is to protect Rokuko and fight off assassins. I’m keeping my paws off babysitting Aidy.”

Pretty sure that saving Rokuko from being stabbed to death by Aidy counts as protecting her, but, well, I won’t mention that. We need to keep this a secret from Haku, so yeah. Misha would probably get punished too if she found out, so for both of our sakes it was best to just not talk about this.

“So, what’d you call me for?”

“Right. The truth is, we found an artificial dungeon when we went and destroyed that criminal organization in Pavella,” I said, then explained that while we had destroyed the Core, the dungeon itself was so simple and shallow that it hadn’t fallen apart.

“Aaaah! Well, I would have wanted you to save the Artificial Core, but okay, not bad. Whew, that Demon Realm brat can be helpful sometimes, huh?”

“So yeah. You should go check it out, Misha, and report to Haku or whatever. I already told the Pavella authorities about it, so just ask them.”

“You got it! Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Keima!” Misha gave a salute, then left the room.

I didn’t say a word about Aidy getting controlled, but I didn’t lie either. Good work, me.

I had already talked things through with her and planned out a range of excuses: “My, the Core was a deadly thing. I destroyed it because it was so dangerous. It started letting out black smoke, that was close. It was quite dangerous.” I would then follow up by mentioning that the prior Artificial Core we broke didn’t have any smoke, so dunking them in water first was probably a good strategy.

In the end, Father sent the message “Everything’s okay now! Good job, Keima!” which confirmed Aidy was safe now. We started digging Aidy out from the wall, but midway through she transformed back into a Magic Blade so we could just slide her right out. Rokuko could

withdraw the Dai-Frame directly, so I kind of wish we realized that earlier.

Incidentally, I noticed this at the time, but my GP went up to 36 GP. It had gone down to 33 GP back when I spent 1 to talk to Father about Aidy, so apparently I had earned 3 GP since then. I had no idea what basis this was operating on. Maybe simply making Father happy was the best way to make GP... That would be too logical.

“Keima, can I come in?”

“I’m coming in, town chief.”

Rokuko and Aidy came to my office a bit after Misha left.

“So. What even are Artificial Dungeons, anyway?” I asked.

“Um? I mean, they’re dungeons... that are artificial. It’s right in the name. Am I right, Aidy?”

“Quite. I believe it was from the Holy Kingdom? Truly, it was a strange dungeon.” Aidy had gone there herself, and it was more like a science lab or a growery than an actual dungeon. The black Core itself had been resting in the furthest back room. “This must mean they have produced so many such Cores they are overflowing out of the country. Or at least, they have made enough for imperial criminals to obtain them.”

“I dunno all the political machinations at work here, but the Holy Kingdom pretty much does nothing but bad stuff, huh...? I mean, I know dungeons are pretty convenient since they can just make farms and mines in the snap of a finger, but still.”

In any case, I want to avoid dealing with them as much as possible from now on. Thooough, given Core 564’s left arm and stuff, I can imagine Leona’s working in the shadows over there. I’ll probably be stuck dealing with them whether I want to or not.

“It sure looked like the thing that got stuck on Core 564’s arm, but how’d it actually feel, Aidy?”

“Aaah, the darkness had such an irritating voice, and while I remained conscious it forced me to draw my sword against Rokuko. Oh, sweet Rokuko, could you ever forgive me for being so fragile at heart that I shamefully let a bug take control of me?”

“It must have been pretty intense if you couldn’t resist it, Aidy—it even sent Core 564 from the 500 lot frothing at the mouth, so okay. I’ll forgive you.”

I’m not sure she was actually being controlled, but no point thinking about it. Best to just let sleeping dogs lie.

“Oh, but you do need to pay the repair fees. Gosh, you just went and wrecked so much of my dungeon!”

“It is all the fault of that wretched, wretched Artificial Core. But of course, I shall pay. If I don’t have enough, we can exchange more at the next assembly.”

Rip her the hell off, Rokuko.

“Incidentally, town chief, I would like to properly finish my duel with Rei... The more I remember it, the more I simply cannot stand how our last one ended. It is unbearable.”

She was referring to her duel with Rei in the coliseum right before the Boss Room. As far as I could tell, she hadn’t noticed that Rei had been helping out in the Boss Room afterwards as well. No need for me to inform her, either.

“Sorry, but my dungeon admins are all pretty busy. Just take it as another loss since she stalled for time and got away. Or really, take it as a punishment for causing us so much trouble.”

“Hrm. I suppose there is not much I can say against that. It is true that she performed her goal of buying time admirably, and while I was not thinking of the duel like that, she was victorious in accomplishing her goal. Once again I have lost,” Aidy said. The happy look on her face somehow reminded me of Wataru.

“Rokuko, let us go to the church so I may congratulate the victor.”

“Okay. Let’s go. Want to bring some jam pastries?”

It was then that I connected Rei getting wrapped up with Aidy to me getting wrapped up with Wataru. *My sympathies*, I muttered.

★ ★ ★

The rest of Aidy’s time for her trip dried up, and it was time for her to leave. We’d traveled for four days to get here, but on the way back I just put her in {Storage} and used the [Ivory Beach] to get to the imperial capital within the day. A carriage was already waiting there for us when we arrived at the [Ivory Beach].

“The inside of {Storage} is perfect for psychological training. I may honestly have to revise my opinion of Core 564, considering he survived for three days inside of it,” Aidy said after I pulled her out. Given that even she had found it that impactful, it would probably be for the best if I never put Rokuko into {Storage}.

“Bit late to be asking this, but did you forget anything?”

“Not at all. I already checked with Rokuko. Oh... Oh, goodness. I forgot to settle things with Rei!”

“You’re still hung up on that? I might have to start calling you a sore loser.”

“Aahaha, no, no. This isn’t about the duel but rather a game we played with dice. It was surprisingly invigorating to play such a game of luck. I never would have dreamed Rokuko would be such a fearsome opponent.”

Aidy gave a bright smile, while Rokuko gave a prideful grin. Rei must have gotten exhausted dealing with these two free spirits. *I should reward her with some time off...*

“This was quite an enriching trip. I will visit again, Rokuko.”

“Come whenever you can. You’re always welcome here.”

The two of them gave a goodbye hug. And with that, Aidy got into the carriage and returned to the Demon Realm.

* * *

After seeing Aidy off, we returned to the dungeon. Aaand suddenly I was in the Master Room instead of my office. Before I could figure out what was going on, Rokuko hugged me tightly from behind. It seemed she was the culprit.

“Hm? What’s up, Rokuko?”

“Mm, I was just thinking it’s safe to do this here? Not like Misha can see us.”

That was true, so I just let Rokuko keep doing what she wanted to. Elka and the others working on the Master Room politely looked away and focused on their monitors.

“Thank you, Keima.”

“Hm? Where’s all this coming from?”

“Can’t you guess? It’s about Aidy.”

Oh, right.

“We managed to keep it a secret from Haku, didn’t we? It’s our little secret now.”

“Don’t forget Aidy. She knows too.”

“Oh... Right. Darn.”

I feel like forgetting one of the three main people involved is kind of an impressive feat.

“Well, when it comes to our dungeon, only we know.”

“Niku, Ichika, Rei...”

“Grrr... Good point.”

I had already finished buying everyone’s silence. If worse came to worst I planned to use Succuma’s charms to seal their memories, but due to everyone being slaves and Dungeon Monsters, that hadn’t been necessary. It might have been a bigger problem if we had ended up relying on Redra or Igni.

I walked to where the chairs were in the Master Room and sat down with Rokuko. Since she was hugging me from behind, she had to scoot around to be in front of me. That was pretty cute.

“By the way, why were Redra and Igni unavailable, anyway?” I asked. I mean, we wouldn’t have been able to ask for their help, but I was curious.

“Oh, right. They said something about being in their ovulation period. It happens once every some number of years.”

“Dragons too, huh?”

Their ovulation period being that infrequent was a good sign that

dragon eggs were pretty rare, but that wasn't worth thinking about right now. *That said, it just hit me that pretty much every member of our dungeon is a girl... What are they doing about their periods? Rokuko might not even have one, but what about Niku? Is Ichika pulling through? I should probably ask about this just to be safe...*

"You know, Igni was saying something about making eggs being the sign of becoming a full-fledged woman."

"Neat. Awesome."

"Making eggs means making babies, you know."

"Neat. Very awesome. You can ask Redra all about it."

This was all coming out of nowhere for me. I didn't really want to have *the talk* with Rokuko, so my plan was to throw it all on Redra. Who better to talk about Dragon eggs than an actual Dragon?

"Igni was really throwing herself at egg-warming practice. She practices with an unfertilized egg so she won't break her actual egg when the time comes."

"Neat. Very awesome. Dragons sure are cool." *You learn something new every day, and today I learned about Dragon reproduction.*

"I wonder how humans practice for their children. Do you know, Keima?"

Er.

"Also, how many kids do you want, Keima?"

"I feel like you just dramatically changed the subject."

"You think so? But we promised to do couple-y things together. What's more couple-y than talking about our future kids?" Rokuko asked, looking me in the eyes and giggling.

Oh yeah, I guess we did make that promise. Alright. Let's roll with it.

"Yeah, I guess this is a couple-y conversation. So, uh... H-How many would you want, Rokuko?"

"Hm? Let's see..."

Oh shit. Rokuko always gets super sensual and aggressive in conversations like this. Is this how all married couples are? Should I ask Ittetsu? Nah, the Hubb family in town should be better. They just got married, after all.

"Mm... Hmmm..."

I collected myself while Rokuko thought of her answer. *Whew, alright. Come at me! Hit me with any number you got!*

"I want one hundred... No, two hundred!"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hold on. Isn't that too many digits?"

"Hm? You think so? But if we have one every year, that'll be a hundred in a century." Rokuko tilted her head.

Oh, right. She's a Dungeon Core.

"Let's do our best and try to surpass even Father!"

So seven hundred at minimum, then. Okay. It doesn't seem like she's

taking my lifespan into consideration. I guess it won't matter, since that's why I'm gathering the Divine Bedding in the first place? Alright.

"Y'know, I think I'd be fine with just one or two," I replied.

"Aww, that's so few. It'd be so boring for me."

"I mean, look at Ittetsu and Redra. Igni alone is more than a handful for them."

"Redra has tons of other kids. I don't know exactly how many, though."

Oh. Well, I guess a century to us is like a year to a Dragon, so that makes sense.

"Let's put aside the final total for now and just see how we feel after each child, okay?"

"That's a good idea. Like, once the child's all fine on its own, we can have the next one?" Rokuko nodded to herself. It was a genius combination of not planning ahead yet also being careful and thoughtful.

In any case, I took one of my hanging hands and patted Rokuko's head.

"Mm. Yeees?"

"Oh, nothing. I just thought getting touchy feely would be couple-y too. Also, it's a bit late for this, but good job buying time with Aidy. You did good," I said, and Rokuko beamed.

"I'm your wife, after all. That kinda thing is as easy as a cup of tea in the morning for me. Feel free to rely on me all the time."

"Sure, sure. Also, nice Japanese idiom there. You've sure learned a lot about the language."

"Eheheh. Rub my head more... Touch me more?"

As requested, I continued stroking Rokuko's blonde, pleasantly soft hair.

"Ah."

Suddenly, I remembered that Rokuko had kissed me during all the fuss earlier.

"What's wrong, Keima? You're blushing."

"Er, well... Whoa. You're getting red too, Rokuko."

She must have remembered the same thing. Her cheeks were getting flushed.

"N-Not true. Um, I mean, emotions were high, weren't they? Like, um, I just kind of did it."

"I don't know what's 'not true' then, but, well, sure, alright. Can't blame you for going with the flow."

Yeah, even I think that was a pathetic answer on my part.

Rokuko and I averted our eyes and fidgeted in place. The fact I kept stroking her hair anyway was, well, progress, I guess? Probably.

"Oh, by the way, Father said he'd convince Haku for us if we offer

up 100 GP. We have 36 right now, so we just need three times as much.”

“Not to talk bad about Father, but he’s definitely ripping us off.”

I dunno, seems pretty fair to me. This is Haku we’re talking about.

Anyway, I ended up falling asleep somehow while patting Rokuko’s head. When I finally got back to the inn, Misha was pretty pissed. She tortured me a bit to figure out why it had taken so long to see Aidy off, but that’s another story.

Extra Episode — Rei's Day Off: What Would Happen If You Gave the Absolutely Not-Lazy High Priestess a Vacation

“So yeah. Rei, you did your best hosting Aidy while she was here, and your {Illusion} skill was a huge help in the battle. In honor of your accomplishments, I grant you a one week vacation.”

“Yes, sir! I am hon...honored... what? A vacation?”

“Yeah. Rokuko set everything up for you. I actually wanted to give you a full month, but with the church work and all this was the best I could do. Still, this is your week. Rest as much as you want. I'm sure you're exhausted from all this Aidy business.”

“Y-Yes, sir.”

And so began Rei's reward vacation.

Day One

“What am I supposed to do for a whole week...?”

Rei was immediately confronted with the painful reality that she had absolutely nothing to do. Still, as the High Priestess of Beddism, it would be unthinkable for her to *not* rest despite being on vacation. She needed to be a role model for all dedicated believers out there, and she wasn't about to let them down.

Not that such thinking changed the fact she had nothing to do.

“For now, I guess I can think of this as a normal break from work and just lie down...”

Rei flopped into bed. It was a comfortable futon, the symbol of Beddism. Her dakimakura, enveloped in Keima's jersey, was ready for hugging. She decided to rest and prepare for work tomorrow.

Day Two

“I'm full of energy! Now, time to work and—”

It was only after she put on her nun outfit that Rei remembered she was on vacation. How horrible. Despite being at the peak of physical fitness, there was no work for her to do.

“Gaaah... I-I want to work! I want to be useful to Master!”

In a general sense, Rei was born from the dungeon, and she lived to serve it and the Dungeon Master. And yet, that Master had told her to rest. This created a situation where she *had* to rest but wanted to work even more because she had been told to rest. Rei would have gleefully worked if only Keima hadn't stopped her. That was just the kind of Vampire she was.

“So, Neruneh, what do you think? How should I rest?” Rei asked.

“Whaaat? You're going to ask me thaaat?”

Rei, not knowing what to do, executed the strategy of asking her companions for advice. Neruneh, who was enjoying some reading while sitting at the inn's front desk, had the most hobbies out of any of her companions. In which case, no doubt she knew better than anyone how to spend meaningful days off.

“Let's seeeee... In my caaase, I study magic ciiircles, magic tooools, and practice magiic.”

Hm. Rei thought about that reply. Was it not exactly the kind of work she had been forbidden from doing?

“Um. Isn't that just your job?”

“No, nooo, it's my hobbyyy. It's just a coincidence that my work overlaps with my hobbiiiiies.”

“But...”

“They're my hobbiiiiies,” Neruneh repeated with so much pressure Rei had no choice but to fall silent. And then, it hit her.

“So if I pretend my work is a hobby, I can work even while on vacation! Yeees! Time to go translate some of the Beddhist bible!”

“That's just working on your day oooff.”

Oh no. Her idea had been rejected. And worst of all, working on your day off was one of Beddhism's taboos. One could only do so by performing the holy ritual wherein one delayed their day off for later.

“Grr... Isn't there any way I can do work while on vacation?”

“Reeei, don't you think Kinue would be an expert on thaaat?”

Of course. Kinue's work and hobbies overlapped completely due to her love of cooking and cleaning. She could work on her vacations ever more blatantly than Neruneh since her love of cleaning was so universally known. In other words, she was the world's greatest expert in exactly what Rei was trying to do.

And so Rei went to the inn's kitchen.

“Okay, spill the beans. What tricks are you using?”

“My, my. Please don't frame it in such a poor light, Rei. I always use my days off to rest, just as intended.”

“Enough excuses. Just tell me your secrets. Please.”

“I have no other opportunity to clean our rooms except on my days off, no?” Kinue asked with a smile, and Rei staggered as if she

had been struck by lightning. Of course! Kinue cleaned on her days off... but she cleaned the rooms of the inn's workers—Rei's room, her own room, and so on.

"I... No way! You leave work undone specifically so you can do it on your day off?!"

"Ahaha. Why, I just keep my work life and private life separate. I enjoy making sweets as well."

"I-I see!"

Kinue certainly did offer Niku, Ichika, the Silkies, and even Rokuko and Keima sweets all the time, but to think that she had made them all on her days off by claiming over and over that doing so was simply her hobby!

"But what should I do, then...? My work isn't something I can pass off as being a hobby, unlike you two..."

"It's true that working in the church, managing the dungeon, and running the inn are all blatantly not your pastimes... Mm. Perhaps you should discuss this with Rokuko? She will certainly give you inspiration," Kinue said before returning to work. Rei grit her teeth with jealousy.

In any case, Rei decided to follow Kinue's advice and consult Rokuko.

"And that's the problem."

"Rei, you're exhausted. You need to take it easy."

But upon saying that she wanted to do work while on vacation, Rokuko just told her to relax anyway.

"But, I mean, I just don't know what to do..."

"We should be giving you more regular vacations. This isn't good," Rokuko said, putting a thoughtful hand on her cheek. "Is there anything you *want* to do?"

"I want... to work..."

"You should give up on that. But you're not Keima, so I can see why rolling around in bed all day would be painful for you. Do you have any actual hobbies?"

"Ummm..." Rei fell into thought. However, if she could think of something that easily, she wouldn't have been in this situation.

"What about going out on a trip?"

"A trip..."

"You have five days left, which you could use to, well, go to Tsia or Pavella? Oh, but it'd be dangerous for you to go alone, so what if you took Maiodore with you? Honestly, you could visit the Tsia church as the High Priestess and I'll pretend that's just your hobby."

"I'll go!" Rei replied instantly.

"While you're there, could you deliver a letter to Bonodore... Ahem, a letter to Tsia's archduke for me? Oh, and don't worry about

an inn. They should let you stay in the church, obviously.”

Incredible! She was even giving her a job in the form of delivering a letter! Rei’s mood shot up instantly; consulting Rokuko had truly been a wise idea.

“Could you tell Maiodore I asked her to take you to Tsia tomorrow?”

“As you wish!”

And so Rei obtained permission to visit Tsia. Tralalala.

Day Three

Rei left for Tsia with Maiodore. They were riding a high-class carriage. It was, in fact, the same one they had borrowed when Keima and the others went to the imperial capital to be given peerage. Maiodore normally rode more humble carriages, but when Rei had mentioned going with her to Tsia to deliver a letter, she had instantly made arrangements to take the higher class carriage. Naturally, she hadn’t told Rei. No need for her to know.

“Truly, my apologies for dragging you out here with me, Maiodore.”

“Think nothing of it. It is my honor as a Beddhist to accompany you,” Maiodore replied with a smile. Her eyes subtly glanced down at the handheld crossbow hanging from Rei’s hip. It was a weapon infrequently found within the [Cave of Greed]. No doubt it was for self-defense, but it was still flagrant for her to be carrying it around like that. “In any case... What is the letter you have for the archduke about, might I ask?”

“Who knows? They didn’t tell me. However, since Rokuko entrusted it to me, I will guard it with my life.” Rei smiled proudly to herself while gripping the letter, just gently enough that it didn’t crease the envelope.

Maiodore interpreted that as meaning it was a letter important enough that even the life of the High Priestess was but a stepping stone to ensure its delivery. Her first guess was that it involved the Divine Bedding somehow.

“This is quite grave...”

“Indeed! It certainly is, Maiodore.”

Though, in the end, they arrived safely at Tsia with only Maiodore’s nerves being hurt along the way. They went through the gates without even a search and went straight to the archduke’s estate.

“Hm? Don’t we have to pay a fee to get inside?”

“Ah, no, my carriage is special. It would be strange for the archduke’s daughter to have to pay an entry fee, after all.”

“Oh, right, I forgot that’s who you were. Wait... does that mean

we're going to meet the archduke right away?"

Maiodore failed to completely hide her surprise that Rei had forgotten she was the archduke's daughter, but Rei didn't seem to notice. She mainly just looked worried that she was missing something.

"Yes, we are. Is there any problem with that?"

"Er, no, I just thought we'd have to go through some channels before meeting him."

"I see."

Oh no! Now I'm going to finish my one job in no time! Rei thought to herself with worry, but she wasn't so childish as to delay the completion of her job simply for her own sake. She remained in the carriage. Maiodore on the other hand tensed up even more, fearing that there was some problem after all, but it was all for naught.

They were guided to the parlor without issue, and Bonodore the Archduke of Tsia arrived without making Rei wait long at all.

"Greetings, High Priestess. We are honored by your visit."

"Erm, are you the archduke?"

"Yes. Haha, indeed, I am secretly attending your masses in disguise. Did I surprise you?"

Rei had simply not recognized him and asked the question to stall for time while she checked the map, but Bonodore interpreted that favorably as her recognizing him from mass and getting worried. In any case, now that she knew he was the archduke, Rei straightened her back and got into business mode.

"Honorable archduke. This is the letter Rokuko entrusted me with."

"And so it is received. May I read its contents immediately?"

"At your leisure."

Bonodore opened the letter and read it at once.

"Oh?"

The letter was a simple message saying that the High Priestess was on vacation for the next four days, and she wanted him to let her stay in the local Ivory Church. Bonodore had thought for certain this would be a discussion about borrowing the Divine Bedding, or perhaps about Niku Kuroinu. For reference, Rokuko had written the letter without thinking too hard about it, much like one would write a letter to the father of a friend.

"It says thusly: 'During the High Priestess's stay, please allow her to stay at Tsia's church.'"

"Oh. Okay."

"Very well. I shall make the arrangements."

The letter didn't have any hidden messages, so despite his confusion Bonodore made the requested arrangements. As he could

not read their intentions, following the request to the letter was the safest option for him. He went ahead and told his subordinates to guard the High Priestess just in case.

“High Priestess. Would you like to go to the church immediately?”

“Er, um, sure.”

“Very well. Your carriage is ready.”

By the time Rei replied, the arrangements had already been made. And so she comfortably traveled from the archduke’s state to the Ivory Church in Tsia.

“Wow, so this is an Ivory Church... It’s basically like a part of Haku’s home then, I guess? As expected of such a historic church.”

But as Rei looked up at the grand Ivory Church, she thought to herself that Beddhist churches looked just as magnificent. Maybe that was just her bias, but still. It was pretty ridiculous to compare the Beddhist headquarters with a simple backwater church, but anyway...

“Welcome, High Priestess of Beddism. We have heard much about you.”

“Er, right. Um... Who are you?”

“My name is George. I humbly serve this church as a priest of the Ivory Church.”

He was a friendly-looking older man. That was all Rei really thought after seeing him.

“The color of your hair and eyes is exceedingly beautiful, Lady Rei. The Ivory Goddess must truly favor you.”

“What? Doesn’t she like blonde hair and blue eyes?”

The priest praising Rei’s silver hair and ruby-red eyes threw her off for a second, but then she remembered that Haku the Ivory Goddess herself had silver hair and red eyes. It followed that the Ivory Church would value that color combination above anything else, and would praise it in the context of the Ivory Goddess favoring someone.

“Ah, I see what you mean.”

“Indeed. Only at my advanced age did I earn the Ivory Goddess’s notice and develop white hair, but I am endlessly envious of how divine the white beauty your hair so effortlessly has,” the priest said, stroking his own white hair on his somewhat balding head. Rei made a mental note to suggest to Keima to add similar turns of phrase to Beddism, except with Rokuko’s blonde hair and blue eyes being seen as symbols of beauty.

Hm? Wait... Is this what it means to do work as your hobby?!

Putting aside whether this could really be called a hobby, Rei nonetheless became interested in knowing if the Ivory Church had any other interesting turns of phrase.

“Father,” she said to the priest, “I would love to know more about the Ivory Church!”

“Of course, of course. I will tell you all you wish to know. Hopefully these old bones can prove useful yet.”

Incidentally, thanks in part to the archduke’s guards also being laborers, the church had plenty of staff to handle operations without the priest. Rei thus was able to speak to him extensively late into the night.

Day Four

“I don’t recognize this ceiling... Oh, right, this is Tsia’s church.”

Rei awoke to sunlight streaming through her window. On one hand, that was healthy, but probably not ideal for a Vampire. Incidentally, she ate normal food, she appeared in mirrors (although Ghost-type Vampires wouldn’t), and was basically entirely the same as a normal human... Ah, never mind. She had zero attack power. Some said it was a miracle born from her compassion or whatever, but in reality it really was useless outside of providing nice massages.

“Ah, right! I can use this as an opportunity to improve my massages!”

Inspiration struck, and Rei decided to immediately discuss that with the priest, whom she had become friends with after last night’s conversation.

“I see. You wish to improve your massage skills. Perhaps we can discuss this with a masseuse that attends this church? I have used her services before when my hips began to hurt.”

“That would be amazing!”

“Ohoho, that is quite a nice look in your eyes. I am glad to be of use to a young person like yourself at this age. The Ivory Church’s teachings do say to help others even as you grow older. I will gladly provide my assistance.”

The priest felt his spirits lift at Rei’s giddy enthusiasm. He promptly gave an orphan boy a coin and sent him off to call the masseuse.

“What, you’re doing fine, father? I thought your hips were actin’ up again,” said the masseuse, who turned out to be a veteran old lady. “So, is this beaut a new nun or what?”

“Ohoho, my hips are doing fine yet. This is the High Priestess of Beddhism. She wants to learn more about massages, if you don’t mind.”

“Whaaat?! Aaall my customers left me in the dust ’cause they can get massages from young girls in the Beddhist church, and you want me to teach one of them massages?! I’m already dried up, and you wanna dry me up even more! Look at this!” The old lady showed the creases on her hands. They were pretty muscular; she was probably

stronger than quite a few lazy adventurers.

“Umm... Sorry about that?”

“I’m just messin’ around! Was it not funny? Ahahaha!” The old lady burst into laughter as Rei apologized.

“Massages, huh? Sure, lemme teach ya. I’ll get to brag to my grandkids that I taught the High Priestess of Beddhism about massages. Aaah, really, forget all that about being dried up. Just a joke! All those brats going to Goren to get massages ain’t nothing to me.”

Rei wasn’t really following, but in any case, the lady seemed willing to teach her.

“Thank you!”

“Yup. So, father. You’re our test dummy.”

“Don’t be too rough, you hear? Not that I don’t trust your skills, of course...”

“So first, you push here. It hurts, but it’s good for the hips. Feel for the pelvis.”

“Gah, gah, gah, gah!”

“Like this?”

“Ooooh...”

“It really doesn’t hurt when you do it, huh? Strange world.”

Rei studied the old woman’s massage, and while at it Rei demonstrated the massages she had learned from the Succubi nuns.

“So, there’s a bump right here at the back. It feels good when you push it.”

“Like this?”

“Gyaaaah?! Th-That was the old lady, wasn’t it?”

“Whew. This is somethin’ else. I’ll have to use it for myself.”

Before they knew it, the sun had begun to set.

“Thank you for all your help today, miss. You even gave me a massage too.”

“Ahaha, well, you sure taught me a lot too! If you ever build a Beddhist church in Tsia, just call me over! I’ll help you nuns out!”

Rei exchanged a firm handshake with the old masseuse, and thus her fulfilling day came to a close.

As an aside, the priest was rendered immobile for a bit due to the intensity of the massages. The old lady had gone a bit overboard while teaching Rei.

Day Five

“I don’t recognize this ceiling... Oh, wait, yes I do. I saw it yesterday.”

Once again Rei awoke to the morning sun streaming down onto

her. She wanted to have another fulfilling day off, but what exactly was she to do?

“Oh, I think there was an orphanage next door, wasn’t there?”

Rei recalled Maiodore mentioning on the way here that she had done something with the orphanage following Keima giving her advice. Perhaps it would be best to check up on the place and report to Keima? It was up to Rei to complete this pointless task and get him the information he didn’t need.

“Oho... You don’t mind? Ah, but I’m afraid I’ll need to rest a bit longer. The Ivory Church’s teachings say not to force yourself when you’re ill.”

Beddism had a similar moral lesson. The priest was stuck quivering and unable to properly move his legs due to yesterday, so Rei went to the orphanage alone.

There, she found the children learning math.

“What’s seven times seven?”

“I know! Forty-nine!”

“Correct. Very good. Next question...”

Impossible. Children as small as Niku were casually doing multiplication... Even Rei still messed up when it came to multiplying numbers as large as seven! It would forever be Rei’s secret that she had thought the answer was forty-seven, not forty-nine.

The Register Golem that Keima invented did all the math for her back at the inn. Who could blame her for forgetting her multiplication tables through lack of use? This was absolutely not a case of Rei being inferior to children. She was not inferior in the least. Not at all. Math was simply not her strong suit.

“Nine times nine is... eighty-one! Didja see that, High Priestess?! Aren’t I awesome?!” bragged an energetic kid. He had just shown a perfect master of the multiplication table, from 1x1 to 9x9.

“Very impressive... To think children would be so good at math,” Rei mused.

“Indeed. The children learn surprisingly quickly if you just take the time to teach them. There are even children who learn to use their fingers for math at the age of just ten. Ahaha, why, they might even be more skilled than a noble child that hates to study,” explained the teacher, who happened to be a Tsia merchant. Apparently he had already started drawing apprentices from the orphanage, and they were proving fairly competent workers. This was all the idea of Goren’s town chief—that is, Keima.

“I can hardly ever express enough thanks for Goren and its chief.”

“Your gratitude is more than enough,” Rei said with a proud nod. It was good to know Keima was earning the respect he deserved here.

“High Priestess, let’s play minotag! More minotag!”

Minotag was apparently a game where everyone wielded sticks like they were Minotaur weapons, and whoever got tapped on the back lost. Though since the sticks were really just thin branches, nobody actually got hurt. It was both a form of play, and practice for becoming an adventurer.

“You would challenge me to a duel...? Very well, you will soon fall befo—HYAAAH, eep!” Rei shrieked, being hit in the back and losing almost instantly.

“So weak...! Ah, um, I mean... Sorry.”

“I-It’s okay! Beddhism isn’t about fighting anyway!”

“Sorry, High Priestess!”

And on top of that, they apologized to her out of pity. Grr...

Incidentally, when it came to Goren residents their baseline for strength was Niku, so there was no avoiding Rei being called weak, but she didn’t know that. All she knew was that she was an administrator of the Cave of Greed, but even children thought she was weak.

“Ngh, you’ve left me no choice... Oyasuminasai!” Rei swung the weapon Keima had entrusted her with—not the crossbow, but the Holy Blade Siesta.

“Guh, I feel so sleepy... Nzz...”

“It’s hot... Let me move to the shade... okay, nzz...”

“Fwaah... Oyasuminasai...”

Sleepiness spread like a virus. Rei managed to stay awake thanks to turning on her {Sleep Resistance}, but the children all fell into a peaceful sleep within the afternoon shade.

“Aha. I win... Yawn.”

Once everyone was asleep and Rei had poked everyone’s back with a stick, she put away Siesta, turned off her {Sleep Resistance}, and joined them in their napping.

Maiodore saw the whole thing from afar; seeing how peacefully they all slept was a striking sign of just how respected the High Priestess of Beddhism truly was. She then went to discuss operation costs with the merchant. It was a productive discussion for them both, and the future of the orphanage was safe.

Day Six

Rei knelt in the Ivory Church and prayed with her hands clasped in front of her chest. Her week-long vacation would be ending tomorrow. Despite everything, her days had been very fulfilling, and she planned to return to Goren by the end of the day. The kids in the orphanage wrote her a letter—yes, they were literate, shockingly enough—asking her to come again, which made her feel guilty about

having wielded Siesta against them.

“Thank you for everything, Father.”

“Ohoho, think nothing of it. Come again whenever you wish.”

After saying farewell to the priest, who had fully recovered, Rei returned to Goren. Maiodore, who had coincidentally yet probably intentionally been passing by the church, got in the carriage and rode back with her.

“High Priestess, I heard that you had one more vacation day after this.”

“Oh, you knew? Well, I suppose I would like to spend my final day resting so that I can truly dedicate myself to my work the next day, as is the ideal for a Beddhist.”

“I see. That truly is a splendid line of Beddhist thought.”

Rei gave a proud smile at Maiodore’s praise. For the rest of the day she holed up in the Dancing Doll Inn’s onsen, then slept in her room, which had been thoroughly cleaned by Kinue.

Day Seven

“Okay, work starts tomorrow. Hurry up and be tomorrow! Hurry up and be tomorrow!”

Rei was dying to get back to work. To be honest, she was a workaholic to such a degree it was unsightly for a Beddhist, but none of her coworkers were exactly in a position to point that out. Well, if Keima or Rokuko had seen her, they would have concluded she needed more vacation time.

“Right, I could spend this time writing down a report of everything Beddhistism could learn from the Ivory Church! Okay, paper, paper...”

Rei used some of the DP paid to her as a wage to buy paper. It was money coming entirely out of her own pocket, but she considered it something like an offering up to the dungeon. She understood well the feeling of those believers who actively donated their wealth to the Beddhist church. However, since she was the High Priestess, she wasn’t permitted to donate to the church or work for free.

“The words are flowing from my pen!”

And so, ultimately, she ended up spending her final day off writing a report on religious research. All night, too. Morning came before she realized it. She was just so... So well-rested. It just happened.

And that was how Rei spent her one-week vacation.

Bonus: Day Eight (Vacation Over)

“Rei, you’ve got bags under your eyes. Rest.”

“What?! But I just finished my vacation!”

And so, despite having spent a week unwinding, her all-nighter on the final day made her look unhealthy, so she was made to rest all day without getting any work done. On top of that, Keima forcibly paid her for the ink and paper she had bought.

Thus Rei understood that Buddhism was right to say one needed to rest to do work. Vacations needed to be taken seriously.

Side Episode — Niku and the Isekai Cavity

Niku was in a state of pure panic.

“My head hurts? This is...”

When Niku woke up, she found her head hurting as if she had been struck with swords. Or rather, she had been feeling off for days, but this was bad.

It had all started when she drank some cold juice and felt a sharp pain that sent sparks in her eyes. At first she thought the juice had been poisoned, but a quick sniff test confirmed it wasn't. More sips didn't hurt, either.

From there the pain started to remain after she drank the juice. The pain was so sharp it sent her brain rattling. Eating sweets Master gave her didn't make it better, and in fact just made the pain worse. She experimentally tried giving some of the sweets to Ichika, but she didn't seem bothered. Of course not. Master would never make her eat anything poisonous, and even if he did, she would gladly eat poison for his sake.

With that conclusion, Niku drank some water... and dropped the cup, breaking it. The pain shot through her even when the water wasn't even cold.

Fast forward to the present. Niku was at a loss. Her head hurt—unbearably so. The pain was chronic and hurt worse than being cut with a sword. Niku's focus diminished, and it got to the point that it was affecting her work.

She finally had to accept she was diseased. Only a terrible sickness could be so painful. At this rate, the pain would grow so great she wouldn't even be capable of being useful to Master... The very thought of that sent her tail trembling with fear. The fate of a useless slave was expulsion. She didn't want to be expelled. She didn't want to stop being useful to Master.

Niku steeled her resolve. She surrendered herself to losing her seat as head slave and, enduring the enormous pain, went to Master.

“Master...”

“Hm? What's up, Niku? You seem sick.”

Her tail flopped down sadly. As expected, she couldn't hide her suffering from him. She collected herself and told him that she was diseased, that the pain was too great to work, and that she should be

expelled before anyone else got her sickness. But naturally, her kind Master did no such thing and called over Ichika to check on her.

Niku didn't think Ichika knew much about medicine, but it would make sense for someone with as much experience as her to know about whatever was making her sick. She was worthy of being Master's next head slave, and so Niku opened her mouth obediently, ready to be examined.

"Aaah. Yep, this is a cavity."

"Figures. Thanks, Ichika."

Niku tilted her head in confusion, tears in the corner of her eyes.

"A... cavity?"

"Yup. Your back molar's pitch black. Girl, have you not been brushing your teeth? That's no good. You gotta brush after you eat. Geez, even {Purification} would be good enough."

Niku fell silent.

Thinking back, she had often fallen asleep from exhaustion after eating a small dinner following training. She thought it would be fine if she just used {Purification} after she woke up. Now that she focused on it, the pain in her head was centered around her teeth.

"A cavity... So that's what this is?"

"Yuppers. The symptoms are what's giving you hell right now. It's a disease that bungles up your teeth... Or, well, it's not a legit disease, but y'know. It's not deadly, most of the time. And curing it's simple too. You'll be back to normal in no time."

Really, it was more common for someone to die in an accident due to being distracted by their cavities than anything. Hearing that, tears streamed down Niku's cheeks, although her expression remained unchanged.

"Whoa, holy crackers! Does the cavity hurt that bad?"

"No, I'm just... I'm just happy I can still be useful to Master."

"Good grief, girl, talk about overkill for a little cavity..." Ichika sighed and gently patted Niku's head. Carefully, so it didn't hurt her cavity.

"By the way, Ichika. How do you cure cavities here anyway?" Niku's kind Master asked, curiously. Niku perked up her ears; she wanted to hear this too.

"If it were a small one that didn't hurt, enough casts of {Purification} to peel off the black junk and a couple of potions or Restoration spells would fix it. But {Purification} won't do much when drinking water starts to hurt. The cavity's gotta be cleaned, filled with putty made from, like, wolf teeth, and *then* healed."

A small enough cavity would be like healing a cut, but as it got bigger it started to be treated like a lost body part, and to be healed you needed something to fill in the space.

“Now, when it hurts all the time, that’s when shit gets real. You gotta just pull the whole tooth right out. A noble could hire some mage who knows strong enough Restoration magic to restore lost body parts, but that runs some serious gold... Well, I guess that doesn’t mean much with Master around.”

Apparently casting {Purification} on cavities bad enough to hurt all the time was so painful that many would choose death over it. Niku felt herself tear up at the thought.

“So yeah, best just pull out your tooth and get some Restoration on! Maaan, if only you brought this up sooner. It could’ve been fixed with just a bit of {Purification}!”

“Ngh...”

Niku stiffened with a jerk. Her tooth would be pulled out. Just thinking about it made the blood drain from her face.

“Ichika. I think I’m feeling better now. Enduring the cavity’s pain will make me stronger.”

“Idiot. Master’ll be pissed if you don’t cure it. Right, Master?”

“Yeah. I’ve heard of people getting blood disease from cavities and just dying from it, since bloody gums lead right to the heart. Get cured, Niku.”

“Aww... Okay...” Niku had no choice but to nod with Master ordering her like that.

“You sure don’t look happy, Niku. What happens if you cast Restoration magic without using {Purification} on the rotting tooth first?”

“I mean, what’s the point of fixing your teeth with the cavity still hanging around? You gotta clean it.”

Fair point. Niku had no choice but to face the full extent of the healing process.

“How do we get the tooth out?”

“Nothin’ fancy,” Ichika replied, busting out pliers. They were large pliers, normally used to pull fangs and such out of monsters to use as proof of having killed them. S-Surely she didn’t intend to stick that into someone’s mouth, right? She wasn’t going to wedge the cavity between the prongs and squeeze, was she? Niku unconsciously tucked her tail between her legs.

“What else? Is there any anesthesia or, like, something to make it not hurt?”

“Weeell, I have heard about anesthesia being used, but you gotta be a pro. Even with a {Detox} skill, your heart or lungs going numb would just flat-out kill you, so yeah. Gotta get your license.”

“This world has licenses and stuff...?” Master thought back and recalled how even fried food had required a license exam, or whatever.

“Remember the Azure Fishery I took you to that one time? The chef of that place has a license. Turns out he’s actually a doctor.”

“Oh right, the place with tasty urchin pasta.”

Niku hadn’t liked the pasta. It had a thick, poison-like flavor, which made sense given that it was literally poison. According to Master, it was a flavor that needed mature tastebuds to appreciate.

“Alright, so we just need to get her to that chef guy, right?”

Niku’s tail perked up at the prospect of it not hurting. She would even suffer bitter medicine if it helped.

“Buddy, you knocking out the Bloody Kraken with Aidy yesterday got him caught by the authorities. He’s sitting in a jail cell right now and probably will be for years. Too bad, he was a good chef *and* dentist.”

“Seriously? And what, that place actually was illegal?”

“Pretty good though, right?”

Niku was struck by despair as her own hope for a painless recovery was dashed.

“Weeell, I’d rather her not feel pain when we do this, but...”

“Don’t sweat it! I’ve hunted tons of Wolf-type monsters; I’m basically a pro at ripping teeth out! All you gotta do is cast Restoration magic and we’re done!” Ichika snapped the air with the pliers. Niku swung her head side to side fearfully, her legs trembling. The last time she had been this terrified was when she had faced off with Core 50.



“Niku. Seems like you’ve just gotta steel your resolve here.”

“Ngh... This is the worst thing...”

“C’mon, girl, I can’t pull it out with your mouth shut,” Ichika said.

“C-Could we at least have Rei do this...?”

“Hm? Rei can’t pull teeth out. Her attack power’s zero.”

Oh, right. She probably couldn’t pull the teeth out even if she pulled as hard as she could. Niku despaired once again.

“I-I’m still, um, those big pliers still are kind of, um, scary,” Niku stammered.

“True. They’re pretty big, since they’re meant for animals and all.”

It would be quite uncomfortable for Niku to have these big pliers stuffed into her small mouth. Especially since her tooth was getting pulled. It might rip her lips.

“Maybe we could have Rei set the pliers on her tooth so it won’t hurt her mouth,” Master suggested. “Then you can break the tooth off, Ichika, and Rei can pull it out.”

“Pretty sure it’d be easier for you to just make a smaller pair of pliers, dude.”

“Good point. Oh! Wait a second. That gives me an idea.”

* * *

“Okaaaaay, open your mooooth. {Purification}, {Purification}, {Purification}, {Purification}...”

Rei the High Priestess was curing someone’s cavity. The patient in question had cavities severe enough that they hurt without him doing anything. The amount of {Purifications} it took to clean out the tooth and remove all the cavities was far more than most things took, but it didn’t hurt at all. Such was a miracle granted by the High Priestess of Beddhism’s endless compassion. Thus the patient’s cavities were cleansed, and his teeth ended up pearly white again.

“And now they’re clean. All that must be done now is filling the hole and healing the shape.”

Rei kind of just slapped fillings into the guy’s teeth. She touched the sensitive areas carelessly and smacked the filling in, which normally would have made the man experience such excruciating pain that he might have passed out. However, due to the miracle of her saintliness, it didn’t hurt in the least. In fact, it was so pleasant that it was almost addicting.

“You holiness, he is ready.”

“You got it. ■■■■■, ■■■■■—{Healing}. Okay. And now one {Purification} to finish him off.”

With one last spell, it was done. The final stage was done by the pope since it didn’t need the High Priestess’s miracles, but in any case

once he was done nothing remained but perfectly clean teeth free of cavities.

“Incredible! This is a miracle! Aaah, I feel so relieved! Oyasuminasai!”

“Yeah, yeah, oyasuminasai. The donation box is over there.”

“May you learn well from this experience and keep your teeth clean. Next, please.”

“Th-Thank you...”

Healing Niku’s cavity led to a new job being established for Rei the High Priestess (and the pope, incidentally). That job being the curing of cavities. Most of their patients were those who felt pain just from drinking water. Some, like their last one, had more severe cases. So far, they had a satisfaction rate of one hundred percent.

They had jacked their prices up when Bonodore sent a letter begging them to do so, since the churches and doctors who had previously dealt with cavities were going broke, but even so the stream of customers didn’t stop.

“I never thought we’d get so famous just from word of mouth,” Master mused.

“It makes sense. Most people only notice they have cavities when it’s too late.”

Most people in Tsia only ever drank cold water in the winter, by which time their cavities tended to be severe. Master was already regretting ever starting this, but Rei was full of life now that she had a lot of work to do.

“Master. That’s everyone for today,” Niku said, feeling bad that she was the cause of Master having so much extra work.

“Niku, did you brush your teeth?”

“Yes. They’re all clean.”

Even if there now existed a way to get cured painlessly, Niku had started brushing her teeth every day so that she wouldn’t get cavities again. Master praised her and patted her head.

Afterword

“Excuse me, Supana-sensei... You have three books left.”

I didn't even have it in me to ask three books of what. My editor I-san gave me time, and I found myself staring at the sky with a distant look in my eyes. The countdown to the end of Lazy Dungeon Master had begun. The countdown to its final volumes.

“So the time has finally come, huh?” I asked.

“Yes. At best, we can keep it until Volume 17.”

I mean, naturally, I never thought it would keep going forever. From day one, I asked them to tell me ahead of time what the last volume would be so I could prepare ahead of time instead of just having a sudden ending. I knew it would happen eventually.

Five and a half years have passed since I started posting the web novel. The first volume of LDM was published a year after that, which was four and a half years ago. It lasted this long thanks to all of you reading and providing your support, of course. My dream of becoming a light novelist finally came true, and the fact my series continued for over ten volumes is even better than I could have ever hoped for. All that's left for me to do is write up to the final volume, and live up to my readers' expectations.

I mean, thinking about it, having three whole volumes of leeway is incredible. I feel like I might be getting special treatment thanks to how much support you guys all show me? They say most light novels die after their third volume, but I've got three whole volumes just to finish things. I mean, wow, they're letting me write all the way up to Volume 17? Wowee! Seriously, I owe a lot to I-san for wrestling out three volumes worth of leeway for me. So, with that said, I'm gonna start cashing out on all the foreshadowing and seeds I've spread in past volumes. Thanks, everyone, and I hope you stick with it to the end.

Incidentally, I would also like your support for my next series, and it's pretty common for Narou adaptations to get an anime after being completed, so work your magic there too. I'm open to any anime adaptation offers.

In any case, I have a lot of pages for the afterword. There's honestly enough space for an entire short story here. Actually, I've been addicted to making ASCII art lately, so maybe I could post some AA of Rokuko? No? The deadline is too soon? Sorry.

Incidentally, Volume 4 of the manga is going on sale at the same time as this volume. There's a lot of good stuff there, like a short story written just for it, and some parts that got fixed up from the web novel. They say that works that sell a lot get anime adaptations... Oh, I see, you already purchased five copies! Thank you. It's due to all of your support that I can keep writing.

So, this is basically entirely irrelevant, but I went to a restaurant lately that thanked me for regularly using hand sanitizer when I walked in. That's a pretty clever psychological trick. The people who don't use hand sanitizer will feel pressured to live up to the expectations of the person who thanked them. Let's keep our hands clean, everyone.

Okay! Time to talk about Volume 14, spoilers and all. I'm going to talk about past volumes as well, so any strange individuals who decided to start the series with the newest volume should be warned.

The plot of Volume 14 was pretty much set in stone since Volume 13 ended with Aidy coming to the town. In the web novel she dropped by Goren before Keima and Rokuko ever went on their field trip, but just like Beddism stuff, got moved around. Oh, and did I talk about how Volume 12 led to them arriving at the tournament at a different time in Volume 13? Yeah, matching that stuff together led to Aidy's trip being put off as well.

I also followed up on some dangling threads left after Keima's visit to that town in Volume 10... Wait, hold on a second. I wrote that part of the volume since I-san told me it would be a good idea. Did he know the series was about to end? Just how long ago did he know the final volume was incoming...? Well, it's something I wanted to write anyway, so okay.

Incidentally, Aidy was really excited to visit the empire since she thought her visit would inspire dangerous hijinks just like Keima's visit had caused such a stir in the Demon Realm, but in the end it was so boring that she ended up exploding. Her efforts to blow off stress led to them taking down an organization plotting some devious things, and thankfully they solved it before it grew into something unstoppable.

Which was, of course, the Holy Kingdom's influence. An artificial dungeon showed up in Volume 12, and here an Artificial Core enslaved an actual Core. Aidy going on a rampage after getting taken over drew from Core 564 in Volume 11 and the Dungeon Eaters that threatened their dungeon in Volume 8. There was also a recreation of a battle that occurred during their Dungeon Battle with Aidy in Volume 5... So yeah, this volume used a lot of elements that had been building up in previous volumes.

Incidentally, about the red urchins that were used to make the

poison... I mentioned them in this volume's original short story, but they first appeared in original content I wrote for Volume 4. At the time Niku didn't like them due to the poison, but they really do taste good when cooked. The urchins we Japanese people eat have poisonous spines too. Naturally, the nature of the poison is different, but they taste great when cooked. The only problem is that fishermen hate them due to the poison. They're considered pretty cheap, and you can buy one for about 100 yen.

Let me abruptly change the subject to the auto-translator. You can skip literally all of this and be okay.

In the world of LDM, there is almost no food that's exactly the same as what you can get in Japan. Any exceptions would be something brought by a Japanese person like Keima. So, how is it that the urchins are called urchins, just like Keima is familiar with? Because all the Heroes before him had looked at them and thought "Yep, these are urchins."

The auto-translator used by Heroes in LDM is, in fact, a database built up by all the Heroes to ever live. The first time a Hero looks at something and considers it an apple, it'll be called an apple unless majority rule collectively changes it to something else.

This means that if a bunch of Heroes decided "Listen, you can't EVER do that!" actually meant "Do it now," then their words would be interpreted by the isekai residents as "Do it now."

However, there is an exception to this, which is when a Hero's individual perception overrides the database. For example, let's say a Hero taught isekai residents that "apples" were actually called "oranges," and the isekai people would interpret "orange" as being a word which indicates "apple." The Hero at the time would think of it as "oranges = oranges," and when asked about an apple he would hear it as "This is an orange." However, if the Hero forgot about oranges entirely and got asked again, then he would hear it as "This is an apple." Something which reminded him it was oranges would turn the sentence into "This is an orange" again, so nobody would ever notice what happened.

The only time it becomes possible to notice this is when other Heroes get involved.

A: "There sure are a lot of apples here."

B: "Actually, those are called oranges here."

A: "Huh? That's what I said. Apples."

B: "Huh? I'm saying oranges... Wait."

So yeah, it's only when Heroes talk to each other that the auto-translator finally starts to break down a bit. Does that mean anything? No, not really.

Thus concludes an explanation of an aspect of the auto-translator

that will probably never be mentioned in the actual series.

Keima tried to test something like this with Rokuko in Volume 1, but in the end it wasn't Rokuko that was misunderstanding but Keima's auto-translator that was mixing things up. Oh, that's all the space I have for this afterword. See you next volume.

Supana Onikage

Bonus Short Stories

Popular Minstrel Songs at the Bar

It was a day like any other. I dropped by the bar to give Wozma a message, and once there I noticed a wide-open empty space that was plenty big enough to hold a table and chairs. Wasn't often you saw that in a busy bar.

"What's up with the empty space?" I asked.

"Aah, that will serve as a stage later. We have minstrels visiting the town at the moment."

"Minstrels, huh? Neat."

Minstrels in this world were like newspapers, though they were a lot less reliable, and served to spread all sorts of news. There was always a huge time lag between the happening of an event and their telling of it, and their word could hardly be trusted since they would exaggerate events to their liking. Still, they were a valuable information source. You could even use them for controlling the flow of information, as we had done when making Ichigo's songs popular in the imperial capital.

"What songs are they singing?"

"The most popular song at the moment is He Who Conquers Dragons."

"Oh...?" *I've got a bad feeling about this.*

"Yes, it refers to you."

"C'mon."

There were basically no "likeness rights" or "intellectual property" in this world, so there was no way to stop this kind of thing. Minstrels were just filthy, filthy plagiarizers after all.

"...Think we could ban that song in this town?"

"I understand your embarrassment, but would there be any point in stopping them after so long?"

Ngh. I can't argue with that.

"I suggest you welcome it, if I may. The more fame you have to your name the more people will gather here, and the more the town will grow."

"I don't actually want the town to grow any more than it already has, y'know."

"Well, it will continue to grow whether you do anything or not, I imagine."

So what, it's going to grow whether the minstrels are singing or not? Bleh, whatever. Not like I could stop them even if I wanted to. They have their own lives to worry about, anyway... Which reminds me, I've never actually taken the time to really listen to a minstrel before. I'm curious, both to hear what they're like, and to see how the auto-translator functions with them.

"Could you let me know when the minstrels drop by?" I asked.

"What are you planning to do to them?"

"Just curious what the song about me is like. I'll listen in from afar."

"Ah. Very well, I will send one of my waitresses to get you."

And that was that.

* * *

The waitress came, so I went to the bar.

"Ah, there you are, town chief. They are about to begin," Wozma said. I saw a minstrel with a lute sitting in a chair where the empty space had been. He was a slender dude with a clearly handsome face. He strummed the strings of his lute. Time to see how he was.

"Oooh, ooooh! The black-haired legend that conquered a dragon as lustrous as heee♪! His heart and soul were the pinnacle of beautttty♪! Aaah, aaah, nobody can compaaaare! Even a Hero would kneel before the dragon conqueror so faaaair♪!"

He sang so quickly it hurt my head. I couldn't tell if the auto-translator was squishing the words together to make a direct translation work, or whether he just sang that fast to begin with, but it didn't matter. Even the lyrics hurt my head. To make matters worse, the drunks that were listening were throwing out cheers and roars of approval. They simply didn't know that the legend in question had promptly lost spectacularly in the Demon Realm. And then got enslaved. *Your hero lived as a slave, you hear that?!*

"He climbed Tsia's mountain of fiire♪! He delved deep into the deadly [Flame Caveeerns]♪! The legend faced the dragon with his allies, aaaaand! A new legend was BOOOORN!" The minstrel leaped out of the chair and set his foot onto it, strumming his lute like an electric guitar. The bar regulars were getting pretty into his high-energy performance.

"This form of dancing recently came into style at the imperial capital," Wozma noted.

"Seriously?" The rabbit dungeon's influence was already reaching all the way here. The minstrel continued singing while stomping on the chair rhythmically.

"His blade is too fast for one to seeee♪! His mana overflows, and so did the red monsters fleeee♪!"

I didn't use a sword, and we're the ones who avoided the monsters, not the other way around.

“But deep within the dungeons, his allies feel defeated! The legend faced the Dragon with his black guard dog well-feeed...” His tone dropped on the sorrowful note. *But none of my allies collapsed... Oh, I guess Wataru did? And I guess the guard dog is Niku.* “Behind the door was a crimson Dragooon! The legend lifted his burning-red weapon high in the air! He faced the Dragooon! ROOOOAR!” *Red weapon...? Oh, the spicy paste or whatever. I guess I did have that.* “AND SO! After a deadly battleeee, the Dragon hung his head before the leeeeeend! Aaaaah... I could not compare to your splendor! I shall now serve in your command! The dragon was thus conquereeee, and the peak of the mountain exploded with fire! The shining light gave his allies the strength to rise! And they all returned safely alive! And that hero's name? KEEEEEEIMA! GOOOOOOOREN!”

As he shouted my name, he strummed hard on the lute, like he was playing the world's most metal guitar solo. The drunken bar-goers all roared with approval, clapping up a storm and shouting “Bravo!”

“That felt both closer and further from the truth than I expected...”

“Well, Gozou and Ichika did talk around town about the events extensively.”

“Aaah. Yeah, okay, that makes sense.”

I was actually kind of impressed they properly hid Ittetsu's involvement and made everything come together... and the song was surprisingly fun, too. If pseudo-rock like this was catching on, it might be important to bring the rabbit dungeon up to speed before idol culture is old news. And so I tossed a silver coin to show my approval.

“Ah! Town chief!”

“The man himself's here!”

“What?!” cried the minstrel, a beaming smile on his face. “The legend himself?! Please do introduce me—” he began, then froze when he saw me. “That is not at all how I imagined... er, excuse me! I just beautified you in my mind, it's fine now! I am honored to meet you!”

What a rude guy! I get it, but c'mon!

All Is Quiet In the Laverio Empire's Fortune Telling Office!

A government worker brought a document to Princess Emmymephy of the Laverio Empire.

“Princess Mephy, a new fortune has been told.”

“Another one, for me? What is it this time?” Emmymephy sighed in exasperation. The document... the prediction had been made by the

imperial fortune telling office, a secret branch of the Laverio Empire. They were an essential office that predicted much of the future, and there was no doubt that their efforts had saved countless imperial lives. Thus, it was not rare for even the imperial princess to have her movements tied down by the predictions. Naturally, the imperial office only made predictions regarding official imperial affairs, but since those were closely linked to the imperial family, they were often the subject of predictions.

(Incidentally, predictions could be intentionally broken, but the backlash from that would greatly lower the accuracy of future predictions for some time. In order to avoid said backlash, the empire would usually work to trace the events of the prediction in as safe a way as possible, and only break them when it was absolutely necessary.)

“Eerm, once again I am honored to stand before your imperial visage, and...”

“I say, drop the greeting. You already told me what you were here for. Move on.”

“I suppose that is correct. Ahem, let me see here... This prediction is an unusual one, in that it is multiple choice.”

“Multiple choice...”

That meant the prediction would have something like “At this rate, X will happen, but if you do this, then Y will happen.” It ultimately allowed one to choose an outcome from among several. If Keima or Wataru were here, they would no doubt make a reference to choice popups in video games.

Emmymephy let out a sigh of relief. There would be no backlash no matter which choice they made, and they tended to be much safer.

“It’s been too long. I say, the last one was when I was only five.”

“And that one was just based on whether you drank milk before bed. In the end you chose to not drink and avoid peeing the bed, but... be careful, princess. It is possible that if you had chosen to drink milk on that fateful night, your chest might not have become the flattest board in all the empire. The prophecies have influence in ways we cannot foretell.”

“Silence! Enough small talk! Just get on with it!” Emmymephy barked at the rude official. He shook his head with exasperation and read the prediction.

“Ahem... ‘I speak of a month. You may choose to visit and enjoy the music of a rabbit minstrel. If so, this year’s harvest will surely be plentiful. You may choose to travel to poor villages in an unmarked carriage. If so, a village will surely be saved. There is only one path.’”

“Very well. I will give up on visiting Ichigo’s live shows for a month. Do as the prediction says and prepare an unmarked carriage,”

Emmymephy said with a sigh.

“Are you sure?”

“Of course.”

“There is only one path” was the traditional line marking the end of a multiple choice fortune, and it in turn meant that the second she went to one of Ichigo’s live shows, a village would be doomed. As the imperial princess, Emmymephy could not allow that to happen to her own people.

“On the other hand, the bountiful harvest will probably happen regardless of what I do. It didn’t say there would be a poor harvest if I traveled through the villages, no? I say, I shall save the town, and I will pray for a bountiful harvest too.”

“A wonderful approach!”

And so, Emmymephy departed on a journey to visit the poor towns of the empire.

Subsequently.

“Ngh! Emmymephy going on a trip for a month means that we, her guards, will be missing Ichigo’s live shows as well...!”

“I admire Princess Mephy’s aspirations! I understand that we will get to see Ichigo a month from now! But it’s Princess Mephy who is in more pain than anyone right now!”

“I wonder if we can just repeat the phalanx formation until it feels like we’re at one of the shows, even if we aren’t...”

“Look out! A bandit attack!”

“LET’S BLOW THIS STEAM OFF ON THEM!”

The guards hit the bandits with such incredibly fervent blows they were almost killed instantly!

“Wh-What the hell is with these guys?! They’re monsters! GAAAAH!”

“Keep it up, men! Let’s all go to Ichigo’s shows next month together!”

“YEAAAAAH!”

And so, during their travels, the motivated guards took down any bandits they saw, tore apart any monster nest they came across, healed any sick villager they found, joined celebrations with their honed wotagei, and just solved a ton of different problems. When all was said and done, nobody knew which town they had saved in particular, but there was no doubt a town had indeed been saved.

“Alright! Let’s charge straight into our first live show in a month! Let’s go!”

“YEAAAAAH!”

After so much blue-balling, it was safe to say their first live show back home was orgasmic.

Meanwhile.

“Mm, I didn’t get as much DP as I wanted. I guess I’ll put off my plan to expand the fields above my dungeon. For now, I’ll focus on working on the inside of the dungeon!” a rabbit-type Dungeon Core exclaimed while rolling around in his bed.

Indeed, the harvest hadn’t exactly turned out bad without those fields, so Emmymephy’s decision had been the correct one. Truly, she was a wise princess.

A Peaceful Day in Aidy’s World (Demon Realm Edition)

It was a peaceful morning like any other, with everyone waking up to a nice Goblin raid.

“Whew, that was some nice morning exercise, as usual.”

“Yup, yup.”

The townsfolk chatted as they chopped up the Goblin corpses. Goblins were of the Earth element, so spreading their corpses across the forest would provide nice fertilization. They would also be bait to draw in other monsters, including more Goblins. There were nothing but good things about a Goblin raid.

It was the children’s job to spread out the chopped-up Goblins.

“Oh! Heck yeah, a Wolf got caught in the trap!”

“Let ’im go, and then the first of us to kill ’im wins!”

“Heeey! No fair!”

The kids playing in the forest had their grinning faces covered in the blood of their enemies. Just like always. However, a shadow crept upon them as they played.

“GRAAAH! Are you lot really settin’ traps again?!” roared their dad. He was mad at them for setting traps in the forest without permission.

“Eep! Sorry, dad! Ow!”

“Sniff! Ngh!”

“I tried to stop them! Ow!”

The kids were all knocked on the head. Their feet sunk into the ground a little from the force, but that was normal.

“I’m always tellin’ you, hunt for your prey yourselves! Don’t get lazy!”

“Sorrriyyy,” the kids chanted together, rubbing their heads. Whether they actually felt sorry or not was not a hard thing to guess.

After seeing the kids race further into the forest, their father let out a heavy sigh. They would surely shame him in the future by being too lazy to hunt for prey. He could only hope that he was managing to

teach them that setting traps to enjoy only the fun part of a fight would never build character.

“Only a dumb as rocks Wolf would get caught in one of their traps. Where’s the fun in fighting a small fry...?”

“Hey, hey, don’t be so hard on them. You used to set traps yourself when you were their age, remember?”

“Ngh... Well, you’re not wrong...”

The father scratched his head as his friend pointed out his dark history.

“It just means they’re still young enough to have fun fighting prey that weak. It’s cute, y’know?”

“...Yeah. I just gotta wonder what their mother would say,” the father said, looking up wistfully at the sky as he thought of his now-deceased wife.

“She’d probably call you a candy-ass and tell you to train ’em up so you can fight them to the death, right?”

“Gahaha, yup!”

He had killed his wife in a duel. It had been the most intense duel of his life, and even now his heart ached at the memory of it. What a good day that had been.

“Daaaad! We found an Oooorc!”

“We beat it! I broke an arm, though!”

“Ahahaha! I wanna see more blood!”

The father sauntered over. “Whoa, this is a big one! Alright, let me teach you how to butcher it.”

Incidentally, the father and his friend had killed a Minotaur while engaging in their peaceful talk. Dinner would be plentiful that night.

“Wow, meat udon!”

“Yup. You all get first dibs on the Orc’s guts and heart. Do your best to steal from each other.”

“YAAAY! Let’s eat!” The kids started punching each other in the faces. The winner would get the tastiest guts and the heart. Blood sprayed everyone in the perfect image of a friendly family dinner. Incidentally, the winner was the kid who broke his arm. Getting hurt made one stronger and less afraid of pain.

That night, the kids slept soundly, having worked hard all day. It was the adult’s time.

“Hopefully there’s a night raid.”

“Yeah, we worked our ass off to steal guard duty tonight. I’m gonna be pissed if nothing comes.”

Indeed, it was a heart-thumping night, where a monster raid could happen at any time! How many monsters would come? What would they be? The guards held up their magic stones, until eventually a shadow came rushing their way at high speeds!

“Oh! A Hippogriff! Heck yeah, that’s a biggun! Hey... Wait! Don’t go rushing off on your own!”

“Bwahaha! A Hippogriiiiiff!”

“Gaah, you got the first hit! EVERYOOONE! A Hippogriff is heeere!”

The second guard ran around, yelling to wake everyone up, then joined the fight second. He landed a blow to the heart, accidentally killing it early. He should have let it live for longer to enjoy the fight.

“Sheesh, this is why being half-decent isn’t good enough. You gotta get *actually* good!”

“Sorry, sorry! I’ll do better next time!”

“Alright, you’re forgiven! I mean, the next one’s already here!”

“Whoa, a Death Owl! Lucky us, we get to fight the assassins of the night! Wait, you’re running off again?!”

Thus went on a fun, busy night.

Then the sun rose, and it was time for morning again...

* * *

“...There! Is that not what a peaceful town day is like?!” Aidy exclaimed.

“Not the kind of peaceful days we know,” I replied. To be honest, the “peaceful days” Aidy spoke of sounded more like a nightmare hellscape following an apocalypse than anything. Being woken up to monster raids, fighting all day, beating the crap out of your family for food, then suffering raids throughout the night as well... Seriously, that was hell. How could the Demon Realm survive like that? It just didn’t make sense.

“Also, what was that about using magic stones as torches?”

“Oh. It’s simple, really. The monsters are attracted to the mana within the keystones, so swinging them around at night serves as excellent bait.”

So despite being on night watch, they’re actually drawing the enemies to them?! That’s the Demon Realm for you, folks! Let’s never learn from them!

“A-And what about the wife who died...? The husband killed her...?”

“Hm? I would say that in almost all marriages, one of the two will be dead by the time their oldest child turns five. It is just difficult to control oneself for that long, you see; it just happens by accident. Though naturally we of the nobility contain ourselves.”

“Demon Realm culture is terrifying!”

“Aww... But it’s so much fun. Incidentally, we of the nobility are expected to ensure the monster population in our land grows without ever allowing them to be entirely exterminated.”

It was on that day that I firmly resolved to never live in a Demon Realm town, no matter what happened.

Misha on the Run

“Misha, would you care to duel?”

“Please spare meow already....”

Ever since Misha had toured Goren’s dungeon with Aidy, she had been challenging her to a duel at seemingly every opportunity. Misha’s mistake had been accepting the first couple duels, thinking that she owed that much to Rokuko’s friends. Little had she known that Aidy... or any Demon Realm citizen, really, was incapable of showing restraint around those stronger than them once they got a taste of their strength. Especially when there were no societal barriers or status interfering with matters.

Aidy was at least obeying Rokuko’s rule that she had to follow imperial culture and only engage in a duel after getting permission, which spared Misha from being attacked from behind. She appreciated that. However, a small blessing was all it was.

Perhaps due to having absolutely nothing else to do, Aidy honed in on Misha whenever she napped and challenged her to a duel. It didn’t matter how many times she refused! Over and over and over and over! Did she have nothing but duels on her mind?! No! Nothing! She was a quintessential Demon Realmer!

“...Wait, is she just asking Rokuko where I am?”

If Rokuko used her map function, she could locate Misha in an instant if she was within her dungeon’s territory. If she was sharing that information with Aidy, then nowhere in Goren was safe for Misha. That was no good at all. She wouldn’t get a wink of sleep.

Thus, Misha decided to both nap and do guard duty outside Goren in the forest. Keima would understand how she felt, for sure. She would repay him by letting any flirting he did in the meantime fly uncontested.

Misha spread out threads of mana to detect any invaders, then leaned back to nap and/or daydream.

“There you are. Shall we duel, Misha?”

“Nghbwhaah?! ”

Misha’s daydreaming was interrupted by Aidy approaching and calling her name. But how?! They were outside of the town! Outside of Rokuko’s dungeon territory!

“Hm? I asked Rokuko and she told me.”

“For real? Meowsers...”

Whether Rokuko had some trick up her sleeve or just had territory that extended far beyond the town, she knew exactly where Misha

was. She needed to get even further next time.

“Shall we duel? Or shall we simply engage in battle instead?”

“No, and aren’t those the same anyway?”

“Oh my, shall we do both, then?”

Demon Realm people never understand! Misha fled on the spot. Luckily, she was fast enough to escape safely.

That said, the same problem happened over and over, such that eventually she would need to go insanely far from the town to be safe. It was an option to simply establish a one duel a day routine with Aidy, which would probably be easier, but that would make the princess of a rival faction stronger by the day. Misha hated the thought of that, and thus, she focused her efforts on simply fleeing.

“Surely I’ll be safe here,” Misha said with a sigh, only to hear some rustling grass. She shot her head in that direction and... saw a mouse. Whew.

Suddenly, she recalled that Rokuko’s inn held these things called rat races. She also recalled that during that fateful Dungeon Battle, she had swarmed the dungeon with rats and choked a Minotaur with one.

“I-It’s you! You’re Rokuko’s spy!”

Misha instantly activated her {Life Detection} and {Presence Distinction} skills. She detected all sorts of life around her, and distinguished many of them as rats hiding in the shadows. On top of that... There was a Dungeon Core rushing right this way. It was Aidy!

“DUEL ME, MISHAAAAA!”

“N-NEVEEEER!”

Misha fled from Aidy. She had to assume that the entire forest was in the palm of Rokuko’s hand. She would need to find somewhere else to hide.

Perhaps the Demon Realm custom of winners enslaving losers was a vital tool for avoiding situations such as this.

★ ★ ★

Thus, Misha searched for a place to nap that was absolutely not in Rokuko’s territory, and could not be reached by rats.

“Now that I know their tricks, this is too easy.”

Misha went all the way to the top of Mount Tsia. Another step and she would be in Core 112’s [Flame Caverns], so there was no chance of it being in Rokuko’s territory, and the hot ground inside would burn the feet of any rats that approached. The question was what Core 112 would say, but given that he was a friend of Keima’s, he would probably understand.

“I’ve come from Goren to naaaap! Please lend me a spoooot!”

Being so open about her intentions must have been a good idea, since no monsters attacked her, and she managed to safely nap in a

comfortable, if a bit hot, area in the dungeon. Thus Misha found a safe spot to nap... Oyasuminasai. Zzz.

Incidentally, a few days before Aidy returned, Keima told her a much simpler solution—gamble the right to challenge her to a duel in a duel, then win that duel. It worked, and from then on she was able to quietly nap in town as she pleased. On one hand, Misha respected Keima's wisdom and mastery of Demon Realm culture, but she really really wished he had just told her that sooner.

The Melancholy of Cid Pavella

"My head hurts." Cid looked at the report in his hand and sighed. The sky was clear, but his heart was clouded and heavy as a stone—all due to this report.

"An organization hired to assassinate the High Priestess of Beddhism is hiding out in Pavella's slums of all places? Aah, what a pain."

Cid took the report the Adventurer's Guild had given... or rather, forced upon him, and went to investigate things himself. All he learned was that there was no escaping the reality of the situation.

"The Bloody Kraken, huh...? This reminds me that Tsia managed to wipe the Last Commune out and clean their slums up in one fell stroke... Whew, am I jealous."

Naturally, he had heard the details from Bonodore Tsia, the archduke of Tsia. He had hoped to handle the Bloody Kraken in the same way, but it turned out that Bonodore had simply asked Keima Goren for help.

...Cid already owed Keima Goren a debt that would take countless years to repay. He couldn't rely on him again. How shameless would he have to be to ask him to eliminate the enemies targeting his own people, that were hiding out in Cid's land? You would have to be... well, you'd have to be as pitiful as Count Lodol, the former town chief of Dragg.

Or so he thought...

"Are there any villains on death row or monsters that need to be exterminated here? What about Pavella?"

Never had he imagined that Keima Goren would come to him asking for enemies to fight. To think he would be forced to make his debt even greater... Or no, wait. This could be flipped around. As far as Cid could tell, it seemed like Keima and his companions were gearing up to solve the problem on their own terms anyway.

Cid thought that far in a single instant. He held back his urge to vomit in disgust at himself and told Keima everything he knew, making no attempt to hide anything. It didn't seem like Keima was

going to push the point, thanks largely to the Demon Realm princess, perhaps. All Cid could do now was pray that they settled things as cleanly as they had in Tsia.

* * *

And so, almost everyone in the Bloody Kraken ended up dead or missing.

Most of those missing had apparently been killed so brutally they didn't even leave a corpse behind, although some had managed to flee the fighting. Cid didn't expect they would go that far, even though he did give them largely free reign to do so. Anyway... From what he could tell, they spared anyone who didn't attack them head-on, and they hadn't destroyed the slums in general. They had technically settled matters cleanly.

All in all, things would have gone a lot worse had Pavella's troops been deployed, and it would have taken longer too. The fact they accomplished all of that in a single day went beyond "incredible" and into outright "legendary." At the very least, the Bloody Kraken had been ground so finely into the dirt it would never, ever revive.

Had they gone so far because the Bloody Kraken had targeted the High Priest of Beddism? Or was it a threat to Cid, saying that they would do that to all of Pavella if necessary? He could only pray it was the former.

Keima visited the chief residence of Dragg a few days later. This time, he made an appointment.

"Thanks for the help back there, Cid."

"I'm the one who should be thanking you really."

"Nah, nah. I mean, I was gonna die soon at the rate things were going."

"You were...? I didn't know. I see, that explains that... So that is why you went as far as you did?" Cid asked cautiously while accepting the Golem beets Keima had brought with him.

"Yeah, pretty much."

It seemed that the Bloody Kraken had been attempting to assassinate Keima Goren as well. It only made sense he would be so brutal, with his life on the line like that. Cid sighed in relief, glad to know the circumstances behind it all.

Incidentally, Keima had actually meant that Aidy would have killed him, but all in all it was close enough. Cid and Keima weren't quite on the same page, but they were reading from the same book.

"Mind if I ask how you took down the Bloody Kraken, so I can reference your strategies for next time? I won't push the subject if you want to keep your methods a secret. It must have been something

really special to get results like that in a single day.”

“Hm? Oh, nah, I didn’t do anything that special. I’ll tell you.”

Cid’s cheek twitched when Keima said that he hadn’t done anything special, considering that ultimately he had destroyed a slum-controlling organization in only a single day. Keima, meanwhile, had answered honestly—he mostly just watched Aidy’s slaughter.

When Keima finished explaining the quite problematic methods they had used (using the Demon Realm princess as bait and killing anyone who came to kidnap or kill her), Cid cradled his head and concluded that Keima surely did have something out for Pavella after all. If not for his noble pride, he would have slammed his forehead against the table.

The Worries of a New Dungeon Master

Cut to the back room of the rabbit dungeon. Rinnew, having been forced into the Dungeon Master position by Keima, had been brought up to speed.

“This is actually a dungeon, and now you’re its Master!” Mikan concluded.

“I see... So, all this Dungeon Master business is a pretty big secret, huh?” Rinnew asked.

“Yup! It sure is!” Mikan exclaimed, bouncing happily with flapping ears. That warmed Rinnew’s heart. It wasn’t good that Dungeon Masters died when their dungeon was destroyed, but... considering she was dedicating her life to the rabbits anyway, it wasn’t a big issue to her.

“So, what, the [Ivory Labyrinth] has a Dungeon Core and Dungeon Master too?”

“Yuppers. I dunno about a Master, but the Core is Haku.”

“Haku...? Wait... Are you telling me it’s *that* Haku? The White-Winged Goddess of the Dungeon Busters?”

“Hmm? Oh yeah, I think adventurers call her that. She’s also called the Ivory Goddess and the First Queen or something too!”

Rinnew was at a loss for words. Haku was such a big deal that everyone in the capital, no, the entire empire knew who she was. That was also the first time that Rinnew realized all of those Hakus were the same person. They were all so important she thought they couldn’t possibly be the same person, and that powerful people just had a tradition of adopting the name Haku.

“She’s the leader of the Dungeon Core faction I’m in.”

“I-I dunno what to say... Is she gonna kill me for hearing about all this stuff?”

“Nah, we’re on the same team now!”

Well, if she was the leader of the faction, they probably wouldn't meet very often, if at all. Rinnew calmed herself down.

"Keima's my boss, and she's his boss! I'll introduce you to her later."

Rinnew barely held herself back from vomiting blood.

It was then that the door to the break room opened and a demon poked his head in.

"It's time for my break. Serve me a drink!"

"Ah."

"LOOK OUT, KING! HYAAAH!"

Protect the rabbits! With a heart strong enough to resist a Succubus's charms, Rinnew leapt forward and reacted with immense speed. She charged the goat-headed demon with Mikan at her back, and...

"Oops. Careful now."

That wasn't enough to compensate for the vast difference in skill level between them. Rinnew had no idea what had happened, but she was flipped through the air, and the next thing she knew, he was stepping on her head.

"Ngh! Run, my ki—"

"Hey, Core 564! Quit it! Rinnew is my Dungeon Master, okay?!"

"Oooh, you finally worked up the courage to ask, hm? That was a long journey!" he exclaimed while swiftly removing his foot from Rinnew's head.

"Wh-What the heck...?"

"Er, how are you feeling, Rinnew? I had him lead that huge raid from earlier, and you see, the thing is..." Mikan explained the circumstances. "So yeah. This guy is actually on our side too."

"Indeed, Rinnew or whatever your name is... Oh, and do not expect me to apologize. You attacked me first, and I merely flipped you onto the ground!"

"Apologize, Core 564! You could've been more peaceful about it!"

"Nghahahahaha?! F-F-F-Forgive meee!"

The sight of the goat-headed demon Core 564 trembling and apologizing at Mikan's orders certainly showed which of them was the top dog.

"So you beat a huge raid event... that is, the Dungeon Battle, and now he works for you?"

"Yup! That's about it."

"So that was what that fight was all about... Sigh."

"Also, that event was really popular, so we're in the middle of preparing another raid from him!" Mikan said, taking the opportunity to reveal his future plots... or plans, rather.

"I just... You know, I don't really know how to take this."

“You’ll get used to it! Oh, want to pat my head?” Mikan stuck out his head, which Rinnew patted. It put her at ease.

“Well, at the end of the day, I guess we were all dancing in your palm.”

“You mean the wotagei stuff?”

“That too.”

She had just heard his explanation about it, but she really never expected wotagei to be just buildup to organized fighting. That explained why the phalanx had been so easy to use in combat scenarios.

“Keima thought all that up!”

“He must be some kind of genius. Is he actually a demon, too?”

“No, he’s a human! Just like you! I think? Maybe?”

Rinnew got a fuzzy feeling from the sight of the orange rabbit tilting his head to the side.

“Well, regardless, he is more of a demon than I am! Yet again I was worked to the bone today... Mmm! Barley tea is as good as ever!” Core 564 exclaimed while chugging the tea he had made. That settled it. He had to be on their side, she just felt it.

“What can I say... This really is the underground side of the world,” Rinnew muttered, thinking back to what Keima had said.

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“So yeah, Redra. Seems like Keima wants to turn our fuckin’ exploits or whatever into a book,” Ittetsu said.

“A book?! Aaah, that’s kinda embarrassing, but sure! He’s just gotta make us look cool and awesome!”

“Er, he’s probably talkin’ about the Dungeon Battle, y’know.”

Redra thought back to that Dungeon Battle and her role in it. Ah, yes, it was all coming back to her... All the bad memories...

“H-Hold on a second! I wasn’t... aaah, I don’t even want to remember it...”

“Hey, don’t sweat it. You’ll look plenty fuckin’ cool. Your Dragon form speaks for its fuckin’ self, believe me.”

“Y-You’re right! I’m cool, awesome, cute, and the perfect wife all on my own! Yeah, I don’t gotta worry about a thing!”

“That’s the spirit. You’re my wife, and the best fuckin’ wife in the world. I’m gonna go tell Keima you gave the go-ahead.” Ittetsu turned, and let out a sigh of relief.

“Heeey, Keima! I got the fuckin’ approval.”

“Whoa, really? Consider me surprised.”

“Hey, all I had to do was keep quiet on the details,” Ittetsu said, then leaned forward and whispered awkwardly like he had something

to hide, even though nobody else was there. “So you’re gonna make a picture album of Redra now?”

“Yup, probably next month. It’s made of paper and you’re paying for it, so take care not to accidentally burn it.”

“Yeah, I’ll manage somehow. Don’t sweat it. Man, I can’t wait to see a book full of Redra!” Ittetsu cackled to himself. Keima just shook his head.

Indeed, this was a request from Ittetsu. Keima hadn’t been planning to make a book of Redra at all, but in a conversation with Ittetsu the topic of photo albums came up. Ittetsu ended up asking if Keima could make a photo album of Redra for him.

“Are you not recording Redra on the monitor and saving footage of her?”

“Of course fuckin’ not! That’d spill the beans that I’m always staring at her!”

And there you have it. It seemed like Redra would laugh and let him do it if he just asked, since she would definitely appreciate him boring holes into her with his eyes, but anyway.

“Alright. I’ll take the footage we have from the Dungeon Battle and all the other stuff Rokuko recorded and print out pictures to put in a book.”

“Yeah! I’ll pay what I told ya!”

Ittetsu was pretty excited. Apparently even with Redra home all the time, he wanted all he could get of her. Dragons had a penchant for being hoarders, and in Keima’s opinion it looked like as a Salamander, Ittetsu was the same way.

Incidentally, not long after the book was delivered, Redra remembered the talk and asked Ittetsu how the book turned out, when she ended up finding out about the album. In the end, she let him keep it, despite saying something like “Y-You big idiot! If you just asked, I’d show you my body any time!” It can stay between you and me that her letting him keep it depended on him making a photo album of himself and giving it to her.









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